DE GRUYTER

Agathias

THE HISTORIES

CORPUS FONTIUM HISTORIAE BYZANTINAE -
SERIES BEROLINENSIS

AGATHIAS: THE HISTORIES

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AGATHIAS
THE HISTORIES

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND SHORT EXPLANATORY NOTES BY
JOSEPH D. FRENDO

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Cork, May, 1975 J. D. C. Frendo

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INTRODUCTION

Most of the information we possess concerning the life of Agathias derives from his own writings. The following is a bare outline of the main facts which emerge from a consideration of the explicit and implicit autobiographical data contained in these writings. [1]

Agathias was a native of Myrina in Asia Minor. His date of birth cannot be determined exactly but may be placed somewhere around the year 532 A. D. His father, Memnonius, was a "rhetor", a title which may imply, as has been suggested, [2] that he was a provincial lawyer in Myrina. His mother, Pericleia, died in Constantinople when he was only three years of age. It was probably in Constantinople too that Agathias' boyhood days were spent. He received an expensive education, studying rhetoric in Alexandria and law in Constantinople. Once qualified he practised as a lawyer in the capital where, from all accounts, he had to work hard in order to make a living. The date of his death is as uncertain as that of his birth. It must have occurred some time after the death of Chosroes in 579 (the last datable event mentioned in the Histories) and before the accession of the Emperor Maurice in 582 in view of the apparent ignorance of this latter event betrayed by Agathias when he refers to the future Emperor simply as "Maurice the son of Paul" [3]. On this reckoning, then, it will be seen that he was 33 years old when Justinian died in 565 and that he lived through the reign of Justin II and a part of that of Tiberius I Constantine.

Agathias' literary activity is marked in its first and youthful phase by the production of "a number of short pieces in hexameters entitled "Daphniaca", adorned with certain amorous motifs and replete with similary enchanting topics". [4] The Daphniaca have not come down to us. They were probably completed before their author had reached the age of thirty. [5] To an intermediate period belongs his work of compiling a collection of epigrams by contemporary poets, generally known as the Cycle, [6] to which Agathias himself contributed approximately one hundred poems. This anthology was published early on in the reign of Justin II, probably in 567. [7]

[1] For a detailed and comprehensive treatment the reader must consult Averil Cameron Agathias (Oxford 1970), pages 1—11.

[2] By Mrs. Cameron: op. cit. p. 4.

[3] Histories IV, 29, 8.

[4] Preface, 7.

[5] cf. Mrs. Cameron: Op. cit. p. 9.

[6] Much of it has been preserved and is to be found in the Greek Anthology.

[7] cf. Mrs. Cameron: ibid.

For the work of his maturity, the Histories, Agathias was equipped neither by natural inclination nor by personal experience.[8] His life had, it seems, been an uneventful one and the oppressive picture of routine dullness and unremitting toil conjured up by his portrayal of the busy working life of a lawyer in the capital[9] is but slightly relieved by the recollection of a few memorable occasions — the experience of mild earth-tremors during his student days in Alexandria,[10] a landing at Cos shortly after its destruction by a tidal wave and the awful scene of devastation that confronted him there,[11] a visit to Tralles.[12] Certainly his friend and fellow poet Paul the Silentiary was a man of wealth and influence who moved in court circles, but it seems that the range of Agathias' acquaintance was confined to a narrow coterie of poets and literati and there is nothing to suggest that he came into direct contact with any of the important political and military figures of his day. Moreover the lack of official patronage of which he complains so bitterly provides a further indication that he always remained something of an outsider.[13] Agathias must have begun the writing of his Histories some time after the accession of Justin II. He was still writing in the reign of Tiberius and it clear from IV, 22, 9 and V, 25, 5. that he did not live to finish them. The five books that he has left us cover a period of seven years (A. D. 552-9).

Despite their author's obvious failings as a historian[14] and the stiffness and affectation that not infrequently mar his style,[15] the Histories are a detailed and important source and are not altogether devoid of literary merit. Indeed the impassioned rhetoric of his speeches and the by no means negligible though somewhat uneven quality of his narrative suggest that, had he lived in a different age, Agathias might have achieved his true fulfilment as a historical novelist. In the way he handles a theme, for instance, or presents a series of events he sometimes shows a sense of dramatic fitness and an eagerness to impose a pleasing pattern on the mind of the reader which would belong better to a work of romantic fiction than to a piece of sober historical writing. The story of Chaeremon of Tralles is a case in point.[16]

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[8] He himself claims that he turned to the writing of history partly in response to his friends' encouragement (Preface, 11—12) and confesses that he found the prospect daunting but took comfort in the thought that history and poetry had much in common.

[9] Histories III, I, 4.

[10] Histories II, 15, 5—8.

[11] Histories II, 16, 4—6.

[12] Histories II, 17, 6.

[13] cf. Preface 18—20. An unmistakeable note of personal bitterness is struck in Histories V 20, 7.

[14] For a recent and very full discussion of the subject cf. Mrs. Cameron: op. cit. pp. 30—58.

[15] Cf. Ibid. pp. 57—88.

[16] Histories II, 17, 1—8.

Inscriptional evidence would appear to indicate that Charemon was a man of considerable wealth and social distinction.[17] In Agathias' version he becomes "a certain rustic named Chaeremon, a tiller of the soil", an alteration which certainly produces a more attractive story.[18]

The present translation has the advantage over all previous ones of being the first to be based on the Greek text of Professor Keydell's edition.[19] It can claim the further merit of being the first complete English translation of the Histories ever to appear. Though earlier translations into other languages[20] have been carefully consulted, this version was, in the first instance, produced independently of them and with reference solely to the Greek original.

In translating an ancient author accuracy is in the main achieved by conscious and objective means — attention to detail and diligent and discerning application of the apparatus of scholarship. But the final form in which the completed rendering is cast is determined by a more intangible process which is largely instinctive and idiosyncratic. I now propose to give a brief account of how I have tried to tackle the more obvious obstacles to translation that Agathias presents. For my own style I offer no apology. Suffice it to say that in matters of vocabulary and idiom I have sought to steer a middle course between the extremes of archaism and colloquialism and that I have not hesitated to allow myself whatever freedom in translation seemed necessary in order to meet the fundamental requirements of clarity and intelligibility.

With regard to proper names,[21] wherever there was an acceptable form in English which was not simply an unmodified transliteration of the Hellenized version of the word given by Agathias, such an alternative form has been freely adopted particulary if it represented a closer approximation to the

17 cf. T.R.S. Broughton: Some Non-colonial Coloni of Augustus (in Transactions and Procedings of the American Philological Association 66, 1935 pp. 20—22).

18 Of course one cannot be absolutely sure that Broughton's identifications are correct, nor is there any way of knowing how garbled Agathias' original was, but the treatment does seem to provide a good illustration of his approach. As regards the general arrangement of his material it is interesting to note that, according to Dr. R. C. McCail, (The Earthquake of A. D. 551 and the Birth-date of Agathias. Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies vol. 8. no. 3 1967 pages 246—7), aesthetic considerations have led Agathias to take certain liberties with his chronology.

19 Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum Libri Quinque. Recensuit Rudolfus Keydell. Published by Walter De Gruyter & Co. Berlin 1967.

20 From this point onwards all mention of earlier translations must be understood as referring principally to the Latin version of Vulcanius and the 17th century French translation of M. Cousin. Ignorance of Russian has prevented me from making any use of M. V. Levcenko's translation (Moscow-Leningrad 1953) and none of my remarks must be construed as having any reference to it.

21 Other than Greek, that is.

original name or made possible some useful distinction: thus "Wilgang" and not "Uligangus", "Ahuramazda" for the god and "Hormizd" for the man rather than "Hormisdates" used indiscriminately for both, et cetera.[22]

A more complicated issue is raised by Agathias' frequent recourse to cumbersome and unnatural paraphrases in order to avoid using the normal everyday word and thus sullying the archaizing purity of his style by the adoption of a barbarous neologism.[23] Wherever such a circumlocution can be replaced by a single English word without loss of meaning or emphasis, I have done so. Thus I have had no qualms about translating "dome" in V, 9, 30 rather than employing the absurd paraphrase "the circle or hemisphere, or what have you, which projects in the middle". On the other hand, even though it is partly love of archaism which leads Agathias to call the inhabitants of Lazica by their ancient name of "Colchians", the word does seem to have emotive overtones and so has generally been retained.

Despite the invaluable help afforded by Professor Keydell's Index. Graecitatis the would-be translator of Agathias does still occasionally run into the odd unsolved linguistic difficulty and will turn in vain to earlier translations for enlightenment. In such cases I have done my best, but I do not claim to have always found the right answer. The type of difficulty I have in mind is well illustrated by the following quotation:

"τούτους δὲ ἅπαντας ἐκ τῶν Προκοπίου λόγων ἄριστα ἂν διαγνοίης, Γελίμερά τε τὸν Βανδίλον καὶ Καρχηδόνα τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὴν ξύμπασαν χώραν τῶν Ἄφρων ἀπὸ Βονιφατίου τε καὶ Γεζερίχου καὶ τῆς ἐν τῷ τότε ἀποστάσεως πολλοῖς ὕστερον χρόνοις Ἰουστινιανῷ δουλωθεῖσαν καὶ πάλιν τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐπικρατείας μέρος γεγενημένην" (= Preface, 24, 2–5) which Vulcanius translates as follows:

"Haec omnia e Procopii scriptis optime cognoveris et Gelimer Vandalum, Carthaginemque urbem atque universam Afrorum regionem Justiniano subiugatum, rursumque Romani imperii partem factam, post multos annos quam, Bonifacii Gesericique aetate, inde avulsa fuerat".

Now the words "inde avulsa fuerat" are nowhere to be found in the original and have been produced with the same improbable sleight-of-hand with which one might expect a conjuror to produce a rabbit from a hat. Everything falls into place, however, the moment one realizes that ἀπό and ὕστερον go together and that ὅστερον + ἀπό means the same thing as the Modern Greek ὕστερα ἀπό i. e. "after".

Finally, it is hard when translating a work as long as the Histories, never to be misled through momentrary inattention into omitting, distorting or simply misunderstanding even what is perfectly obvious and straightfor-

[22] On the other hand I have retained the well-know name "Mermeroes" in preference to the more correct but less familiar form "Mihr-Mihroe".

[23] cf. Mrs. Cameron: op. cit. C. VIII "Classicism and Affectation" pages 77—88.

ward.[24] I have endeavoured at all times, therefore, to correct all such involuntary slips on the part of my predecessors and to avoid introducing any new ones of my own.

[24] e. g. in connection with the phrase "ὑπὲρ σκολοπός τινος" (IV, 23, 3) we find the words "scopulo" in the Latin and "rocher" in the French translation! Numbers seem especially liable to mistranslation, which is unfortunate in view of the notorius unreliability even of some of the *actual* figures given by ancient authorities. I have made a special effort, therefore, to get my figures right and hope that I have succeeded in doing so.

AGATHIAS: THE HISTORIES

PREFACE

Honour and success are indeed the natural concomitants of military victories and trophies, of the rebuilding and embellishment of cities and of all great and marvellous exploits as such. But whereas this type of achievement brings not inconsiderable prestige and pleasure to those who have possessed it, it does not usually continue to be associated with them once they are dead and gone, but oblivion interposes herself concealing and distorting the reality of events: for when once those with first-hand experience are gone then gone also and extinguished with them is any accurate knowledge. 2 Bare recollection turns out, in point of fact, to be an unprofitable and unstable thing, quite incapable of surviving the wreckage of time. Nor do I suppose that men would have resolved to face danger for their country or to submit to other forms of hardship knowing full well that no matter how great their achievements, their renown, being but commensurate with their life-span, must inevitably perish and dissolve with them, had not some divine providence, it seems, strengthened our natural frailty by introducing the benefits of History and the hopes thereby afforded. 3 It was not, I fancy, for the sake of a wreath of wild olives or parsley that the competitors at the Olympic and Nemean games entered the contest, nor is it through mere desire of plunder and immediate gain that the valiant contestants of the battle-field expose themselves to open and manifest danger. No, both are motivated by the desire for a glory which is permanent and unalloyed, such as cannot possibly be obtained save through the immortality conferred on them by History, not after the manner of the rites of Zamolxis and the delusions of the Getae[1] but in a fashion truly deathless and divine, the only one in which the fortunes of mortals can endure forever.

4 It would be far from easy to relate and enumerate all the blessings that History showers on human life, but, to put the matter briefly, it is my opinion that she is by no means inferior to Political Science, that is if she is

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1 The Getae were a Thracian tribe, first mentioned by Herodotus (4. 94 sq.), who gives a short account of their belief in immortality, the gist of which is that they never really die but simply go to join a divine being called Salmolxis. They also have the practice, Herodotus tells us, of choosing by lot one of their number every five years to send to Salmolxis as a messenger, with instructions to ask him for whatever they happen to want. They dispatch their messenger by tossing him up in the air and impaling him on the points of their javelins.

not actually more beneficial. 5 Political Science issues her orders and instructions, her fiats and her caveats like a stern and unyielding mistress mixing compulsion with persuasion. History, though she makes everything as attractive as possible, rendering her message more palatable by the insertion of a variety of edifying anecdotes and presenting in her account the instances where men have come to enjoy good repute through the wisdom and justice of their actions and where they have been led astray by some miscalculation or chance, unobtrusively instills virtue into men's hearts. For views pleasingly presented and voluntarily assumed win wider and deeper acceptance.

6 After a prolonged consideration of the matter, I came to the conclusion that those who have busied themselves with this branch of literature should be accorded the greatest admiration and eulogized as the benefactors of society, without of course even remotely considering the possibility of attempting to compose in the genre myself. 7 I was indeed predisposed from boyhood to the heroic metre and delighted in savouring the niceties of poetic composition, and so have written a number of short pieces in hexameters entitled "Daphniaca", adorned with certain amorous motifs and replete with similarly enchanting topics. 8 Furthermore I thought it a praiseworthy and not unpleasing undertaking to make as complete a collection as possible of those recent and contemporary epigrams which were as yet unknown and indiscriminately murmured on the lips of some, and to write them down appropriately classified and arranged. This undertaking has in fact been accomplished together with the production of several other compositions written with no strictly practical end in view, but otherwise potentially amusing and entertaining. 9 Poetry is after all a sacred and divinely-inspired activity. In it souls achieve a state of ecstatic inspiration as the philosopher-son of Ariston[2] would say, in which those that are truly seized by the Muse and possessed by this frenzy give birth to offspring of surpassing loveliness. 10 So I decided to immerse myself in the subject and never willingly to abandon these pleasant pursuits of my youth but to follow the famous Delphic injunction[3] and cultivate self-knowledge. But seeing that in my own lifetime it has come to pass that great wars have broken out unexpectedly in many parts of the world, that wholesale migrations of barbarian peoples have taken place, that bewildering vicissitudes of fortune

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[2] The reference is, of course, to Plato. Agathias has a weakness for this type of inane circumlocution; hence the poet Pindar for example is referred to as the "lyre of Boeotia". It should be noted however, that Byzantine taste in such matters differed essentially from our own and that different societies favour different forms of affectation. The ideas expressed here are a reminiscence of Plato's Phaedrus 245 a, where three forms of heaven-sent madness (the prophetic, the cathartic and the poetic) are enumerated and discussed.

[3] i. e. "know thyself" one of the famous exhortations carved on the temple of Apollo at Delphi.

have occurred and unforeseeable and incredible events which in their outcome have upset all calculations, that nations have been wiped out, cities enslaved, populations uprooted and displaced, so that all mankind has been involved in the upheaval; seeing therefore that these and similar things had taken place I was seized with vague misgivings and felt that it might be altogether reprehensible if I, for my part, were to pass over in silence and fail to record such staggering and momentous occurrences, occurrences which might well have a positive value for posterity. 11 I decided therefore that it was not out of place for me to try my hand at history in order that my life might not be spent entirely on the impractical elaboration of poetic fancy but might be made to contribute something useful. And moreover many of my friends spurred on and encouraged my initial endeavour by urging and exhorting me to action, the most enthusiastic support of all coming from the younger Eutychianus, a leading member of the Imperial Secretariate who in addition to being an excellent person and possessed of a ready wit and an adequate amount of culture is in every way a credit to the family of Florus. 12 This man, since he really had my interests at heart and was especially anxious to enhance my reputation and improve my status, never tired of spurring me on and raising my hopes. He kept telling me not to regard the undertaking as difficult or beyond me nor to be dismayed by the novelty of the experience like a landsman embarking on his first voyage. He maintained moreover that in his view history was not far removed from poetry but that both were kindred and related disciplines differing radically perhaps only in the matter of metre. Accordingly he urged me to proceed with confidence and devote all my energies to the project, bearing in mind that I should be equally at home in both fields. 13 As it happened these promptings of his found in me a ready and receptive listener and he had little difficulty in winning me over. And here I am now actually writing a history, and I hope and pray that I shall be able to produce a work to match the earnestness of my endeavour and to do justice if possible to the magnitude of my theme.

14 First I must follow the established practice of historical writing and disclose my origin and identity. My name is Agathias, my birthplace Myrina, my father Memnonius, my profession the practice of the Law of the Romans and of the calling of an advocate. By Myrina I do not mean the city in Thrace or any other city of that name in Europe or Libya as the case may be, I mean the city in Asia which is an ancient colony of the Aeolians, situated at the mouth of the river Pythicus, which flows from Lydia to the farthest strait of the Gulf of Elaea.[4] 15 I hope to repay her as fully as I can for rearing me by writing a complete account of her splendid achievements throughout the course of her history. For the time being I must beg her to accept with

[4] Previously mistranslated as "the Gulf of Elea".

a good grace this earnest of my good intentions, for I must now proceed to deal with matters of general concern and of the utmost importance. 16 I shall write my history in a totally different spirit from that which has animated the writings of my contemporaries. Others in our day and age have approached this task, but for the most part with flagrant disregard for the truth and no concern for historical accuracy, being so openly intent on flattering and fawning upon a large number of influential people that even if they were to speak the truth they would not be believed. 17 Yet the authorities on these matters state that the exaggeration of an individual's merits is the proper business of panegyric,[5] and though the writing of history does not preclude the possibility of praising those who have done good the historian does not, I imagine, see this to be the chief aim and distinguishing mark of his profession. Whenever the way in which a situation has been handled calls for praise or blame the historian must on no account try to gloss over or improve upon the facts. 18 Yet these authors who claim to be writing history and profess to be historians on the title page of their works, are shown up on closer inspection to be charlatans. For they eulogize living men during their lifetimes, be they emperors or persons otherwise distinguished, not just by their presentation of the facts (that would be a venial error) but they make it plain to all and sundry that their sole concern is the bestowal of excessive and unjustifiable praise: when dealing with the dead, however, they either vituperate them as blackguards and wreckers of society, regardless of their true nature, or, which is the lesser of the two evils, show such utter contempt for them that they do not even bother to mention their names. 19 By so doing they think that they are putting their immediate interests on a sound footing and they imagine that by cultivating whoever happens to be in power they are securing their own advantage, a mistaken calculation since those who are the object of their eulogies are not pleased with this sort of tribute and consider that open adulation is not capable of ensuring their reputation. 20 Let these authors write therefore in the manner to which their inclinations have accustomed them; I, for my part, must make the truth my supreme object, whatever the consequences.

I shall relate all the memorable achievements, up to the present time in the Roman and the greater part of the non-Roman world, not only of persons who are still living, but especially of those who have already passed away, and I shall omit nothing of importance. 21 So although I did not start to write my history until after the death of Justinian and the accession of Justin II, I shall refer back to the preceding period and give special

[5] Agathias is probably thinking of the handbooks on rhetoric current in his day which classified in detail the various branches and subdivisions of literature and oratory, and prescribed minutely the form each one of them should take.

attention to whatever has not yet been thoroughly dealt with by anyone else. 22 Since most of the events of the reign of Justinian have been accurately recorded by the rhetorician Procopius of Caesarea I feel I can dispense with the necessity of covering the same ground, but I must give as full an account as possible of subsequent events. 23 Procopius' introduction is taken up with the death of Arcadius and the appointment of the Persian king Yezdegerd I as guardian to his son Theodosius, the events of the reigns of Vahram V and Peroz, and how Kavad became king, lost his throne and then regained it, how Amida was captured by him when Anastasius was emperor of the Romans, and the troubles that Justin I succeeded to in connection with this deed. 24 Then one can get an excellent picture from Procopius of the Emperor Justinian's wars with Persia fought against Kavad and Chosroes in Syria, Armenia and the borders of Lazica, and of Gelimer the Vandal[6] and of how the city of Carthage and the whole of Africa was subjugated by Justinian and became once more a part of the Empire many years after Boniface and Gaiseric and the revolt of that period.[7] 25 Procopius' narrative also gives an account of how, after the destruction of the Vandal Kingdom and the successes and reverses of the Moors when they took up arms against the Romans in many parts of Africa, Stotzas and Guntarith, who were on the Roman side, set themselves up as tyrants and were the prime cause of untold disasters and dissensions in Africa, and of how that country had no respite from her ills until both men were destroyed. 26 Procopius also tells of how the civil disorder in Constantinople erupted in open revolt against the emperor and, reaching alarming proportions, caused widespread devastation, and of the raids of the Huns, who at that time crossed the Danube and did appalling damage to the territory of the Romans, ravaging Illyria and Thessaly and the bulk of Europe, and a part of Asia too after crossing the Hellespont. 27 The tale is told also of the tragic sackings of the city of Sura in Syria, of Beroea and of Syrian Antioch by Chosroes, of the siege of Edessa and of how he was repulsed and retired from there, and a survey is supplied of the battles between the Abyssinians and the Himyarites[8] and of the reason why those two neighbouring peoples became such bitter enemies. 28 The Great Plague is discussed too, how at that time it made its first assault on mankind and what a ghastly variety of forms it took. 29 What is more we must again turn to the same source if we wish to learn of the exploits of the Roman army against Chorianes and Mermeroes and the Persian hordes in the cities of Lazica and the stronghold of Petra.[9] 30 Then the scene shifts to the West and the death of Theodoric

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[6] Usurped the throne of the Vandal Kingdom of Africa in A. D. 530.

[7] A. D. 427. For details cf. Procopius. History of the Wars III 3, 14 sqq

[8] A people who inhabited the Yemen.

[9] i. e. Petra in Lazica, not to be confused with Arabian Petra.

the Ostrogoth and the murder of his daughter Amalasuntha by Theodahad and all the events which occasioned the outbreak of the Gothic War, and then the story is told of how Witigis who succeeded Theodahad as ruler of the Goths was, after prolonged fighting, captured by Belisarius and taken to Constantinople, and of how Sicily, Rome and Italy cast off the yoke of foreign domination and were restored to their ancient way of life. 31 The same source moreover gives an account of the Italian expedition of the eunuch Narses, who was made Commander-in-Chief by the Emperor, of his brilliantly executed campaigns against Totila, and of how after the death of Totila Teias the son of Fritigern succeeded to the leadership of the Goths and how not long afterwards he too was slain. 32 The foregoing is a summary of events down to the twenty-sixth year of Justinian's reign, which, I believe, is as far as Procopius' narrative takes us. It was my intention from the start to relate the sequel to those events, and that is what I shall now proceed to do.

BOOK 1

1. Teias, who succeeded Totila as leader of the Goths, rallied his forces and made an all-out attack on Narses and the Romans, but he suffered an overwhelming defeat in a pitched battle which cost him his life; [10] and those Goths who survived the battle were forced to come to terms with Narses because they found themselves exposed to constant attack from the Romans and crowded together in a confined and waterless spot. The terms granted them meant that they would remain in undisturbed possession of their own territory on condition of their continuing thenceforth to be subjects of the Emperor. This turn of events led everyone to suppose that the fighting in Italy had been brought to a successful conclusion: in reality it had scarcely begun. 2 I am convinced, for my part, that our generation shall see no end to such ills, since, human nature being what it is, they are a permanent and ever increasing phenomenon and, indeed, one which is practically as old as man himself. History and literature, for example, are full of accounts of battles and fighting, almost to the exclusion of everything else. 3 I do not, however, subscribe to the general view that such events are controlled by the movements of the heavenly bodies and by some blind impersonal fate. If the influence of fate were paramount in all things then there would be no place for free-will, we would be obliged to regard all attempts at advice, instruction and methodical exposition as a complete waste of time and the hopes and aspirations of the virtuous would be extinguished and annihilated. 4 But I do not think it right, either, to hold the Divinity responsible for fighting and bloodshed. No, I could never put forward or accept the view that a benevolent being, which is the negation of all evil, could delight in wholesale slaughter. 5 It is the souls of men that lapse voluntarily into greed and violence and fill every land with wars and dissensions, giving rise thereby to widespread destruction, to the uprooting of whole nations and to countless other horrors.

6 And so it happened on that occasion that after the conclusion of the peace-treaty the Goths went their separate ways, those who had previously lived on the near side of the Po making their way to Tuscany and Liguria and to wherever force of habit and inclination led them, while those from beyond the Po crossed that river and dispersed in the direction of Venice and the garrisons and towns of that region, where they had previously lived.

[10] The Battle of Mons Lactarius (A. D. 552).

But once they were back in their own territory, instead of putting their treaty obligations into practice and enjoying at last, in the secure possession of their property, a breathing-space from the hazards and hardships of war, they started, after the briefest of pauses, to stir up fresh trouble and so sparked off another war. 7 However, feeling themselves not yet a match for the Romans they turned to the Franks. They thought that, if by this course they were to secure the alliance of a neighbouring people and then resume fighting, they would improve their present position and could also count on lasting support.

2. The Franks have a common frontier with Italy. They may reasonably be identified with the people who in ancient times were called "Germans", since they inhabit the banks of the Rhine and the surrounding territory, and though they occupy most of Gaul, it is a later acquisition since they did not previously live there; and the same is true of the city of Massilia,[11] which was originally settled by Ionians. 2 Massilia was colonized long ago by Phocaeans who had been driven out of Asia by the Persians in the reign of Darius the son of Hystaspes. Once a Greek city it has now become barbarian in character, having abandoned its ancestral constitution and embraced the ways of its conquerors. But even now it does not seem to fall short at all of the dignity 3 of its ancient inhabitants, for the Franks are not nomads, as indeed some barbarian peoples are, but their system of government, administration and laws are modelled more or less on the Roman pattern, apart from which they uphold similar standards with regard to contracts, marriage and religious observance. 4 They are in fact all Christians and adhere to the strictest orthodoxy. They also have magistrates in their cities and priests and celebrate the feasts in the same way as we do, and, for a barbarian people, strike me as extremely well-bred and civilised and as practically the same as ourselves except for their uncouth style of dress and peculiar language. 5 I admire them for their other attributes and especially for the spirit of justice and harmony which prevails amongst them. Although on many occasions in the past and even during my own lifetime their kingdom has been divided between three or more rulers they have never yet waged war against one another or seen fit to stain their country's honour by the slaughter of their kith and kin. 6 And yet whenever great powers are seen to have reached a state of parity, arrogant and uncompromising attitudes are inevitably engendered and the logical outcome is rivalry, the lust for domination and a host of other passions that constitute a fertile breeding-ground for unrest and dissension. Nevertheless nothing of the kind occurs in their case no matter how many different kingdoms they are split up into. 7 In the rare event of some dispute arising between their kings they draw themselves

11 Marseilles.

up ostensibly in battle-formation and with the apparent object of deciding the issue by force of arms and then confront one another. But once the main body of the army on either side has come face to face they immediately lay aside all animosity, return to mutual understanding and enjoin their leaders to settle their differences by arbitration, or failing that by placing their own lives at stake in single combat. For it is not right, they say, or in keeping with ancestral precedent for the common good to suffer injury and upheaval on account of some personal feud of theirs. The immediate result is that they break their ranks and lay down their arms. Peace and quiet are restored, normal communications resumed and the horrors of war are forgotten. 8 So law-abiding therefore and public spirited are the subject classes and so docile and amenable to reason, when need be, are their masters. It is for this reason that the basis of their power remains secure and their government stable and that they have not lost any of their territory but have actually increased it greatly. When justice and amity are second nature to a people then their state is guaranteed happiness and stability and rendered impregnable to enemy attack.

3. So, living this virtuous life, the Franks rule over their own people and their neighbours, the succession passing from father to son.

Now, at the time when the Goths sent the embassy to them the Franks had three kings. I think it would not be inappropriate at this point if I were to sketch briefly the previous history of the dynasty, starting from a slightly earlier period and then proceeding to the kings who were on the throne at the time in question.

2 Childebert, Chlotar, Theoderic and Chlodomer were brothers. After the death of their father Chlodwig they divided the kingdom into four parts according to towns and peoples, in such a way, I believe, as to effect an equitable distribution. 3 But not long afterwards Chlodomer mounted an expedition against the Burgundians (they are a Gothic people, and outstandingly warlike) was struck on the chest in the thick of battle and killed. When he fell the Burgundians realised, as soon as they caught sight of his long hair flowing loosely down to his back, that they had killed the enemy leader. 4 For it is the practice of the Frankish kings never to have their hair cut. It is never cut from childhood onwards and each individual lock hangs right down over the shoulders, since the front ones are parted on the forehead and hang down on either side. It is not, however, like that of the Turks and Avars, unkempt, dry and dirty and tied up in an unsightly knot. On the contrary they treat it with all kinds of soap and comb it very carefully. Custom has reserved this practice for royalty as a sort of distinctive badge and prerogative. Subjects have their hair cut all round, and are strictly forbidden to grow it any longer.

5 So the Burgundians then cut off Chlodomer's head and by displaying it

to his troops immediately filled them with terror and dejection. There followed an ignominious collapse of their morale and they were reduced to cowardice and no longer capable of fighting back. Peace was concluded on the terms dictated by the victors and in the way they felt best served their own interests. The remnant of the Frankish army was only too glad to return home. 6 Soon after Chlodomer had met this end his kingdom was parcelled out among his brothers, since he had no children. Not long afterwards Theuderic was taken ill and he too died, leaving to his son Theudebert all his possessions and his title.

4. On succeeding to his father's throne Theudebert subdued the Alamanni and certain other neighbouring peoples. He was exceedingly daring and wild and inordinately fond of taking unnecessary risks. Accordingly, when the Romans were embroiled in the war with Totila the king of the Goths he hit upon the plan, which he earnestly sought to put into effect, of raising a large and powerful force of fighting men while Narses and his troops were fully engaged and involved in Italy, and then heading for Thrace, subduing the entire region, and bringing the war to the Imperial city of Byzantium. 2 He made extensive preparations and so far executed his plan as to send embassies to the Gepids and Lombards and certain other neighbouring peoples with a view to securing their participation in the war. 3 He found it intolerable that the emperor Justinian should announce himself in his imperial edicts by the titles of Francicus, Alamannicus, Gepidicus, Lombardicus and so forth, as though these peoples had all become his subjects. He took it as a personal insult and expected the others to share his resentment since it was an affront to them as well. 4 Personally, I am of the opinion that even if he had launched this expedition he would have met an inglorious end after engaging with the Roman forces in Thrace or possibly in Illyria. Indeed the mere fact of conceiving this design and then resolving to carry it out and throwing all his weight into its execution is overwhelming proof of his wild and headstrong nature and that he was capable of equating sheer lunacy with courage. If death had not forestalled the attempt he might well have begun his march. 5 But, as it happened, he was confronted when out hunting by a huge bull with gigantic horns, not one of the domesticated kind that draws the plough, but a creature of the woods and the mountains that deals death with its horns to its adversaries. I believe they are called "buffaloes". They live in great numbers in that region, steep overgrown valleys, thickly wooded mountains and a wintry terrain providing them with an ideal habitat.

6 When Theudebert saw the animal come pounding out of some valley and charging towards him he stood his ground, meaning to face it head on with his spear. But when it got near it was swept along by the momentum of its charge and crashed headfirst into a tree of not particularly large

dimensions. The tree was shaken violently and bowed right over, and it so happened that a bulky branch, which was the largest of those that had been brought down was snapped off with violence and struck Theudebert on the head. The blow was fatal and beyond remedy; he fell at once flat on his back and after being carried with difficulty to his home he died on the same day. 7 He was succeeded by his son Theudobald, who was very young and still under the care of a tutor, but ancestral custom required his succession notwithstanding.

5. At this juncture then, when Teias was dead and the Goths were in a position where they would be needing foreign help for the future, the kings of the Franks were the young lad Theudobald and Childebert and Chlotar, the boy's great uncles, as they would be called in Roman law. 2 But the Goths did not think it a good idea to approach these two since they lived a long way away; instead they sent an open embassy to Theudobald. It was not from the whole people, however, but only those living beyond the Po. Not that the others were not delighted at their attempt at subverting the established order, but being overawed by the uncertainty of the future, and fearful of the capriciousness of fortune they suspended judgment, and kept a wary eye on events, since they were determined to be on the winning side.

3 When the embassy from the Goths arrived, then, they came before the king and all the high officials and asked them not to stand by and let them be oppressed by the Romans, but to join in the struggle and save a neighbouring and friendly people from imminent destruction. 4 And they pointed out that it was in their own best interests too not to allow any further expansion of Roman power, but to make every effort to curtail it.

"If", the embassadors declared, "they succeed in eliminating the entire Gothic nation, they will soon march against you too and fight old wars all over again. 5 They are sure to have some specious justification with which to cover up their territorial ambitions and will in fact appear to be pursuing a just claim against you, citing as a precedent men like Marius and Camillus and the majority of the Caesars on the grounds that they had fought in the past against the inhabitants of upper Germany and had occupied all the territory across the Rhine. In this way they will not give the impression of resorting to violence, but of fighting a just war aimed not at the expropriation of a foreign nation but at the recovery of the possessions of their forefathers. 6 They brought a similar charge against us, saying that in the past Theodoric who was the founder of our kingdom had no right to take Italy. In consequence of which they have robbed us of our property, murdered most of our nation and mercilessly enslaved the womenfolk and children of our wealthiest citizens. 7 And yet Theodoric did not take Italy by force, he annexed it with the express permission of their own emperor, Zeno. He did not in any way deprive the Romans of it (they had already forfeited it).

What he did was to put down the foreign usurper Odoacer, after which he occupied his entire kingdom by right of conquest. 8 But ever since the Romans have been in a better position to use force their actions have been anything but just. First of all they assumed an attitude of righteous indignation against Theodahad ostensibly on account of his treatement of Amalasuntha, which they made into an occasion and pretext for war. And they still show no signs of relenting but these same wise and god-fearing men who pride themselves on their unique capacity for just government persist in a policy of indiscriminate violence and plunder. 9 So, if you wish to avoid yourselves suffering the same fate and then repenting of your complacency when it is too late, you must forestall the enemy at once and not let the present opportunity pass you by. You must dispatch an adequate fighting force against them and a capable general from among yourselves, to bring the war against the Romans to a successful conclusion, drive them out of here with all speed and win back our country. 10 If you do this you will be rendering a signal service to the Gothic people and will be hailed as their saviours and deliverers. You will also be ensuring the safety of your own possessions by the elimination of a hostile presence from your borders, not to mention the vast sums of money that you will receive not only in the form of loot extracted from the Romans but also as a voluntary payment from us."

6. When the ambassadors had delivered this speech, Theudobald (who was an ignoble and unwarlike youth and already seriously ill and, physically, in very bad shape) was, naturally, not inclined to their point of view and saw no reason why he should make trouble for himself in order to extricate foreigners from their difficulties. 2 Leutharis and Butilinus, however, accepted the alliance on their own initiative even though it held no attraction for their king. These two men were brothers, Alamanni by birth, but enjoyed great influence among the Franks, so much so that they actually ruled over their own people under a dispensation made earlier by Theudebert. 3 The Alamanni, if we are to take the word of Asinius Quadratus, an Italian who wrote an accurate account of German affairs, are a mixed and mongrel people, and their name signifies this. 4 They were formerly reduced to tribute paying status by Theodoric the king of the Goths, at a time when he was master of the whole of Italy too. When he died and the great war between Justinian, the Emperor of the Romans, and the Goths broke out, the Goths, in an attempt to ingratiate themselves with the Franks, relaxed their hold upon the Alamanni and withdrew from many other places. 5 Their withdrawal was also motivated by the consideration that they must concentrate their forces by abandoning all superfluous and strategically unimportant positions in the subject territories, since they felt that they would no longer be fighting to maintain their own ascendancy and prestige but would be making a desperate last bid for Italy itself and for their own

survival. And so, they anticipated such risks as the future might hold by a calculated choice and made a virtue of necessity. 6 In this way, then, Theodebert subdued the Alamanni after they had been abandoned by the Goths. After the death of Theodebert, as I have described, they fell to his son, Theodebald, along with the rest of his subjects.

7. They have their own traditional way of life too, but in matters of government and public administration they follow the Frankish system, religious observance being the only exception. They worship certain trees, the waters of rivers, hills and mountain valleys, in whose honour they sacrifice horses, cattle and countless other animals by beheading them, and imagine that they are performing an act of piety thereby. 2 But contact with the Franks is having a beneficial effect and is reforming them in this respect too; already it is influencing the more rational among them and it will not be long, I think, before a saner view wins universal acceptance. 3 For the irrationality and folly of their beliefs can hardly fail, I think, to strike even those who practise them, unless they happen to be complete fools, and as such can easily be eradicated. All those who do not attain to the truth merit pity rather than censure and fully deserve to be forgiven. It is not, after all, of their own accord that they fall into error, but in their search for moral goodness they form a wrong judgment, and thereafter cling tenaciously to whatever conclusions they have arrived at. 4 Yet I am not sure that words are a sufficient remedy for the savagery and depravity of sacrificial worship, whether it be paid to groves as is indeed the case among barbarians, or to the so-called gods of antiquity as was the way with the rites of the Greeks. 5 I am of the opinion that there is no being which delights in bloodstained altars and the brutal slaughter of animals. If there is a being capable of accepting such practices then it could not be beneficent and benign but would in all probability be a malignant, maniacal creature like the vain personifications of the poets such as Terror, Fear, Enyo, Ate, and Eris "the irresistible", as they would call her. You can add the one the Persians call Ahriman to the list, if you like, and all the other bloodthirsty and malevolent phantoms that are supposed to inhabit the underworld. 6 Some readers may consider that I have no business to make such remarks in a book of this kind, that they are uncalled for and irrelevant to my avowed intent. But for my part it gives me great pleasure to bring to light all the facts that come to my knowledge, to praise what is good about them, and to castigate openly and to expose their bad and unsatisfactory side. 7 Indeed, if the writing of history were just a simple and uncritical narration of events without the redeeming feature of serving as a guide to life, then it might, perhaps, be rated scarcely any higher by some (I hope the expression is not too strong) than a collection of old wives' tales. But every one is

entitled to his own opinions on these matters. And now I really must return to my previous narrative.

8 When Leutharis and Butilinus first set out to march against the Romans they were filled with exalted expectations and were no longer able to live a normal life. They thought that Narses would not withstand even their first onset, that all Italy would be theirs for the taking and that they would occupy Sicily into the bargain. They said they were surprised at the Goths being so terrified of a puny little man, a eunuch of the bedchamber, used to a soft and sedentary existence, and with nothing masculine about him. 9 So, puffed up with such notions and regarding the confrontation with arrogant disdain they raised an army of seventy-five thousand warriors from among the Alamanni and the Franks and made preparations for war with the idea of invading Italy immediately.

8. The Roman general Narses, although he had not received precise intelligence of these moves, being extremely far-sighted and always anxious to forestall the attacks of the enemy, resolved to take by storm such towns in Tuscany as were still held by the Goths. 2 He did not let victory go to his head or indulge in vulgar bragging, which is how a different person would have reacted, nor did he give himself over, once his labours were accomplished, to a life of luxury and ease; on the contrary he immediately moved his forces with all possible speed and advanced on Cumae. Cumae is a very heavily fortified town in Italy, and it is no easy matter for an enemy to capture it. 3 Situated on a steep hill which is difficult to climb, it commands a view of the Tyrrhenian Sea. The hill rises up over the shore, so that the waves surge and dash against its base while its top is encompassed with a ring of massive towers and battlements. 4 The former Gothic kings Totila and Teïas had all their valuables and treasures guarded in this stronghold, since they considered it to be secure. 5 As soon as Narses got there he decided it was imperative to capture the place as quickly as possible and gain possession of its treasures, in order to deprive the Goths of a safe base for future operations and extract the maximum advantage from his victory. 6 Aligern, the youngest brother of Teïas the late king of the Goths, was inside the fortifications and had gathered about him as large an army as possible. His intentions were far from peaceful. Presumably he had already received an accurate report of the death in battle of Teïas and of how the fortunes of the Goths lay in ruins, but even so he did not give up, nor was he dismayed by the disaster which had occurred. Relying on his position and plentiful store of provisions he retained his confidence, arrogance and capacity to repel attack.

9. Meanwhile Narses gave the word of command and instantly led his troops forward. Toiling painfully up the hill they approached the fort, and immediately began to hurl their javelins at those who could be seen manning

the battlements. The bows twanged as volley upon volley of arrows was discharged, stones were hurled high up into the air from slings and all the appropriate siege-engines were set in motion. 2 Aligern and his men, who were massed along the stretches of wall between the towers, were not slow to reply with javelins, arrows, huge stones, logs, axes and anything that seemed to serve their purpose. They had their war-engines too, and used them in an all-out effort to beat off the attackers.

3 The Romans had no difficulty in recognizing the arrows from Aligern's bow. They whistled through the air with such incredible speed that, if they happened to strike against a stone or some other hard object, they smashed it to pieces with the sheer force of their trajectory. 4 When Aligern caught sight of no less a person than Palladius, (he was a man especially esteemed by Narses, one of the most high-ranking officers on his staff and a leading figure in the Roman army) clad in an iron breastplate and attacking the wall with great courage he shot down an arrow at him, which ran right through the man's shield, breastplate and body. Such was the extraordinary strength his powerful arms put into drawing the bow!

5 This sort of inconclusive skirmishing continued for several days. The Romans thought it shameful to withdraw without first carrying the place by force and it was clear that the Goths had no intention of surrendering to the besiegers.

10. Narses was greatly distressed and angered at the thought of the Romans having to waste so much time on an insignificant fortress. After pondering and debating the various possibilities he concluded that he ought to make an attempt on the fortress in the following manner. 2 In the eastern corner of the hill there is a cavern which is thoroughly hollowed out and completely roofed in so as to form a natural sanctuary of massive and vault-like proportions. They say that in olden times the famous Italian Sibyl lived there and that possessed by Apollo and inspired she would foretell future events to those who consulted her. The story goes also that Aeneas the son of Anchises once came there and that the Sibyl told him all about the future. 3 Now Narses noticed that part of the fort had been built on top of this cave, a fact he thought he might turn to his own advantage. So he sent as many men as possible down into the hollow recesses of the cave, with tools for quarrying and tunnelling. In this way he gradually chipped and cut out that section of the roof of the cave on which the wall had been constructed, removing thereby so much of the ground the building stood on as actually to lay bare the start of the foundations. 4 He then had upright wooden beams placed as props at regular intervals in order to support the weight of the structure, lest a series of falls should cause it to collapse and thus have the effect of quickly informing the Goths of what was going on. In which case they would have come to the rescue as soon as the trouble

started, put it right immediately, and then taken the strictest precautions for the future. 5 In order to prevent them from hearing the noise of stones being quarried or indeed from having the slightest inkling of what was afoot, the Roman army kept up a furious and sustained attack against the fortifications above, shouting at the top of their voices and banging their weapons. The din was abnormally great and the siege disordered and confused. 6 When the entire section of the wall above the cave was left suspended in mid-air with only the upright props to rest on, they piled up leaves and dry, tinderlike brushwood, which they placed under it, set them alight and then got themselves out of the way. 7 It was not long before the flames blazed up and the charred and burnt out props caved in and crumbled into ashes. That part of the wall which rested on them suddenly collapsed for want of support and came crashing down, while the towers and battlements broke lose all at once from the rest of the structure and toppled forwards. The gate belonging to that part of the wall had been securely fastened, since the enemy were all around, and the keys were retained by the sentries. It was flung down still holding to its sockets and landed intact on the rocky shore where it was lapped by the waves, with its posts, frame, lintel and pivots still fixed to the threshold. 8 When this happened the Romans thought that they should now be able to get into the fort without any further difficulty and make short work of the enemy. But this time too their hopes proved vain. For the ground was full of cracks and fissures and littered with jagged and broken pieces of rock from the hillside and masonry from the fortifications. As a result the approach to the fort was as steep and as impassable as ever. 9 Narses made a more spirited assault on the fort, in an attempt to rush the place. Whereupon, the Goths formed a solid body of men and fought back with all their strength. He was beaten back and could take no further action.

11. In view of the impossibility of taking the place by storm Narses decided not to commit all his forces to this troublesome operation, but to make straight for Florence, Centumcellae[12] and certain other towns in Tuscany, with the object of restoring order in the region and anticipating the approach of the enemy. 2 He had already been informed that Leutharis and Butilinus and the armies of the Franks and the Alamanni had crossed the Po, and he set off, accordingly, with the bulk of his army in that direction.

3 Since Filimuth, the leader of the Heruls, who were marching with him, had been taken ill and died a few days earlier and it was imperative that they should be led by one of their own people, he immediately put their fellow-countryman Fulcaris, a nephew of Phanitheus, in charge of them. He then instructed Fulcaris to set out along with John the nephew of Vitalian, with Valerian and Artabanes and other generals and commanders together with the largest and most powerful part of the army, and making a detour of the

[12] Civita Vecchia.

Alpine range that runs between Tuscany and Emilia, to head for the river Po and encamp in that neighbourhood. They were also to seize all strongholds in the area in order to forestall and check the enemy advance. 4 If they succeeded in driving them back altogether then they must consider themselves fortunate, but if the pressure of superior numbers prevented them from pursuing such a course, they were to impede their progress and not to allow them to overrun the place, but to scare them off and keep them as far away as possible, until he had the immediate situation under control. They set off therefore to carry out his orders.

5 He left a considerable force at Cumae too. They were to invest it with a regular siege, keeping the enemy penned in and blockading them into eventual surrender. So, they set about ringing the place with a continuous line of earthworks and kept a close watch on the exits in order to intercept any possible foraging parties. They reckoned that after close on a year of being under siege the enemy must by now be running out of provisions.

6 In a lightning campaign against the cities Narses annexed most of them without encountering any resistance. The Florentines went out to meet him and, on receiving an undertaking that they would suffer no ill-treatment, voluntarily surrendered their persons and their property. The inhabitants of Centumcellae did likewise, as did those of Volaterrae,[13] Luna[14] and Pisa. He was in fact so successful that he swept everything before him.

12. Only the people of Lucca tried to adopt a policy of temporizing and non-cooperation.[15] And yet it was they who had previously come to terms with Narses, giving him hostages and a sworn undertaking to the effect that, if thirty days elapsed and an allied force sufficiently strong not just to man the fortifications but to engage in open combat on their behalf, failed to arrive they would then have no hesitation in handing over the city forthwith. 2 The idea behind this was that the Franks would soon be there to come to their aid, and it was on this assumption that they made the treaty. But when the appointed day had passed and there was still no sign of the Franks, even so, they were still determined to reject and repudiate their treaty obligations. 3 Understandably angered by this deception Narses began to make preparations for a siege. Some of his staff thought that the hostages should be put to death so that in this way the inhabitants of the city might be made to suffer for their treachery. 4 The general, however, who would never allow anger to cloud his judgment, did not descend to such cruelty as to kill people who had done no wrong, merely as a reprisal for the misdeeds of others, but devised instead the following ruse.[16] 5 He brought

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13 Volterra.

14 Luni.

15 Autumn, 553. For Chronology cf. Averil Cameron: Agathias p. 143.

16 The veracity of the following account has been impugned by M. Ites: zur Bewertung

out the hostages with their hands tied behind their backs and with bowed heads and displayed them in this pitiful condition to their fellow countrymen, threatening that he would lose no time in executing them unless the citizens immediately put into effect their side of the agreement. Now the hostages had had narrow wooden boards fastened to them from the broad of the back to the nape of the neck and covered over with strips of cloth lest the enemy might make out what they were even from a distance. 6 So when the citizens would not obey him he immediately gave orders to have the hostages lined up and beheaded. The guards drew their swords and came down heavily with them as though about to chop off their heads in earnest. But the blow, falling on the boards, did them no harm, despite which they toppled forwards, as they had been instructed to do, writhing and twisting and feigning death of their own free will. 7 The inhabitants of the city who when they saw this could not make out, owing to the considerable distance which separated them, what was really happening but saw only what appeared to be happening, broke out into sudden cries of lamentation at the disaster which they felt had overtaken them. For the hostages were not drawn from the common herd, but were men of especially distinguished rank and birth. 8 Thinking themselves deprived of such men they were seized by an uncontrollable fit of wailing, while frequent cries of lamentation were heard together with a shrill and plaintive noise, as great numbers of women moved about on the ramparts, beating their breasts and tearing their cloaks. These were the mothers or unmarried daughters,[17] as the case may be, of the supposedly dead men, or were closely concerned with them in some other way. 9 So now everybody began to abuse Narses openly and to call him a blackguard and a villain. He was in point of fact, they said, a brutal murderer, and it was to no purpose that he strove by an elaborate pretence to create an impression of piety and devotion.

13. Now while they were making this outcry Narses said "Is it not you yourselves who have proved responsible for their destruction by callously abandoning them to their fate? You will also be shown to have done your-

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des Agathias. Byz. Zeit. 26 (1926) p. 281 and by E. Stein: Histoire du Bas-Empire II. p. 606 n. 2. Cf. Also Averil Cameron, op. cit. p. 51.

17 The Greek "ἐπίκληροι" has been variously and, to my mind, improbably rendered: e. g. as "sponsae" by Vulcanius, and "Les femmes de ceux . . . etc." by Cousin. The basic meaning of "ἐπίκληροι" is "heiress". The specialised sense the word often has in connection with the Attic Law of inheritance is scarcely applicable in this context, but Roman legal usuage in cases of intestate succession whereby married daughters were excluded from the category of those known as "sui heredes" (cf. J. B. Bury History of the Later Roman Empire vol. II p. 404) suggests a possible way of arriving at the meaning assumed in the present translation. At all events it is hard to see how Agathias could have used the word simply as a synonym for "fiancées, wives, or widows".

selves a grave disservice by your breach of faith and wanton violation of the treaty. 2 Yet even at this late hour if you are prepared to recognize where your real interests lie, and to fulfil the terms of the agreement, you will lose nothing: these men will be restored to life and we shall do no damage to your city. But if you refuse, your future troubles will not be confined to them, but you can start straightaway considering how to avoid all of you suffering the same fate yourselves." 3 When they heard this the people of Lucca thought that he was trying to deceive and hoodwink them about restoring the dead to life; and in truth his words were misleading but not in the way they thought. Nevertheless they eagerly gave their assent and swore that they would hand over the city to him immediately to do what he liked with, if they saw that the hostages were still alive. Since, of course, it seemed impossible to them for the dead to come back to life they thought they would have no difficulty in freeing themselves of the accusation of treachery and enlisting justice on their side. 4 At this point Narses, giving the command, suddenly made the hostages stand up and they were then displayed safe and unharmed to their compatriots. When the citizens saw them they were not unnaturally taken aback at the unexpectedness of the sight, though even so they were not all of the opinion that they should fulfil their sworn obligations, and in fact some of their number refused to. 5 With the usual fickleness of a crowd, as soon as their feelings of anguish and distress were replaced by a more hopeful frame of mind, they did a complete volte-face, and the advocates of treachery won the day. But in spite of this despicable behaviour on their part, Narses the general showed great generosity by freeing the hostages at once and sending them to their homes without securing a ransom or forcing any other sort of concession upon the city. 6 While the citizens of Lucca were marvelling at what he did and quite unable to understand why he did it, "I am not in the habit," he exclaimed, "of priding myself on tasteless histrionics and squalid confidence-tricks. For I think that even without recourse to such tactics if you do not join us without further ado, these shall secure your allegiance"; and as he spoke he pointed to the swords of his soldiers.

7 Now the men who had been set free mingled with their fellow-countrymen and whenever they were in company spoke highly of Narses. They recalled the kind treatment they had received at his hands, and it was whispered in every quarter that he was gentle and affable and that he tempered justice with magnanimity. These words in fact were destined, by winning over the contentious and unstable element in the population, to prove more effective than weapons and to persuade the majority to adopt a pro-Roman policy.

14. Narses was still busy with the siege of Lucca when he learnt of the

reverse which the troops he had sent to Emilia had suffered. The news was, understandably, a severe shock to him and a great blow to his morale.

2 Now what happened in Emilia was that in the early days after their arrival they had conducted all operations in a prudent and orderly manner. Whenever they set out to plunder some enemy village or town they marched in regular formation and observed a certain amount of caution when attacking. When retreating they did not allow themselves to get dispersed, but proceeded in an orderly fashion, forming themselves into a hollow rectangle, with the rearguard properly in position and the booty in the middle to ensure its safety. 3 This was the way they set about ravaging enemy territory at first, but within the space of a few days all their initial advantages were dissipated and completely reversed.

Fulcaris, the leader of the Heruls, was admittedly a brave and utterly fearless man, but he was of a wild and impetuous disposition. He did not regard tactical skill and the proper disposition of his forces as the mark of a true general and leader, but prided himself instead on cutting a dash in the field of battle by leading the charge against the enemy in person and by keeping himself in the forefront of the fighting. 4 On this occasion, however, he showed even greater indiscretion by making an attack on Parma, which was already in the hands of the Franks. He ought first to have sent out scouts in order to ascertain exactly what the enemy's plans were and, in this way to conduct an orderly offensive on the basis of prior intelligence; instead of which he led out his army of Heruls together with any men from the Roman army who were ready to follow him, and relying on reckless audacity and brute force set off at full speed, little dreaming that anything would go wrong. 5 But Butilinus, the leader of the Franks was informed in advance of these moves, and, hiding the pick of his men in an amphitheatre (it was designed for the performance of wildbeast hunts) not far from the city, he laid a full-scale ambush and then proceeded to watch and bide his time. 6 When Fulcaris and his Heruls, marching in a slovenly and irregular fashion, had advanced until they were practically encircled by the enemy, the signal was given. The Franks then rushed out and pounced on them, and straightaway cut down indiscriminately all those within reach, overwhelming them with the suddenness of their attack and the unexpectedness of the trap they had set. 7 The majority, however, as soon as they realized what an appalling disaster had overtaken them readily resorted to an ignoble and utterly shameful expedient in order to save their own skins: they simply turned their backs and rushed headlong into flight, oblivious of all their courage and long training in the hazards of war.

15. So Fulcaris, his army having slipped away, was left alone with his bodyguard. Even so he did not see fit to run away, but chose rather to meet a glorious end than to become an ignoble survivor. Accordingly he took as firm

a stand as possible, with his back to a tombstone and slew many of the enemy, charging furiously at them at one moment and slowly retreating backwards with his face towards them at another. 2 He might still have saved himself with the greatest of ease, and his attendants urged him to do so. But his only reply was: "How could I endure the sting of Narses' tongue when he reproaches me for my folly?" 3 Apparently more afraid of abuse than of the sword he stood his ground and held out for a very long time fighting furiously till at length hopelessly outnumbered and with several spear-wounds in his chest, his head moreover badly cut by an axe he reluctantly gave up the ghost and fell face downwards on his shield. 4 The others who had stayed by his side, be it of their own free will or because they were hemmed in by the enemy, now lay in a heap on top of him. 5 Thus Fulcaris was appointed general, a distinction which did him little good, since after a brief and dreamlike spell of prosperity he brought his career and his life to a speedy end.

6 The morale of the Franks, however, was raised and strengthened considerably as a result of this disaster. 7 The Goths inhabiting Emilia and Liguria and the neighbouring regions had previously made what amounted to a peace-treatry and defensive alliance with the Romans, though, admittedly, it was a hypocritical sham, utterly repugnant to them and motivated solely by fear. They were now emboldened openly to violate their treaty and immediately went over to the side of the barbarians with whom they had so much in common. 8 The Roman forces which, as I have already explained, were under the command of John (the nephew of Vitalian) and Artabanes retired immediately together with the survivors of the Herul contingent to Faventia.[18] 9 The reason for the move was that the generals thought it inexpedient to remain encamped in the vicinity of Parma when the enemy had gathered there in force, and because, after their unexpected success, the enemy seemed ready for a trial of strength. All the cities occupied by the Goths, in fact, opened their gates to them, and there was every indication that they were about to make a concerted attack upon the Romans. 10 The generals decided, therefore, to get as close as possible to Ravenna and so elude the enemy, since they felt they were in no position to fight them.

When the news of these events reached Narses he was distressed and angered at the insolence of the barbarians and at the sudden death of Fulcaris, a man of no mean ability, brave in the extreme, and with a distinguished record and many victories to his credit; indeed a man who, in my estimation, would never have died at the hands of an enemy, had but his wisdom been proportionate to his valour. 11 But despite his very real sorrow and dis-

[18] Faenza.

tress at what had happened, Narses did not, as a lesser man would have done, allow himself to become dispirited and disheartened. Instead, seeing his troops demoralized by the unexpected turn of events he decided to address some general words of exhortation and encouragement to them, in order to raise their spirits and dispel their fears.

16. Narses was indeed possessed of a remarkable degree of shrewdness and an extraordinary capacity for coping effectively with any eventuality. Though he had received little formal education and no training in the art of oratory, he was exceptionally talented and particularly good at putting his views across. These qualities were all the more remarkable in a eunuch and in one who had been brought up in the soft and comfortable atmosphere of the imperial court. 2 He was moreover of diminutive stature and abnormal thinness; yet his courage and heroism were absolutely incredible. The fact is that true nobility of soul cannot fail to make its mark, no matter what obstacles are put in its path. 3 On that occasion then Narses made his way into the midst of the army and addressed them as follows:

"People who are accustomed to getting the better of their enemies on each and every occasion and to unfailing and unalloyed success are completely shattered by even the slightest and most momentary reverse. 4 But I think that if a man has any sense he ought not to let success go to his head but should bear in mind how easy it is for things to change and always be ready to face the worst. Anyone who adopts this philosophy will view success with the greatest pleasure and will not consider it a disaster if his calculations are upset. 5 Now I perceive that your distress is disproportionate to what has happened, and it is plain to see that the reason for this is that you have become so inordinately conceited through the habitual experience of victory that you imagine you can never go wrong. If, therefore, you were to put away this illusion and consider the case on its own merits, you would not find it anything as dreadful as you might otherwise suppose. 6 If Fulcaris, and being a barbarian rashness was second nature to him, if Fulcaris, I say, made a desperate and disorganized attack against such a heavy concentration of enemy forces with disastrous but predictable consequences, that is hardly a reason for us to shrink from our present responsibilities or review our commitments. 7 It would indeed be shameful if, while those Goths who have survived the holocaust of their nation, far from resigning themselves to their fate, are busy forming alliances and stirring up further trouble for us, we, entertaining the notion that we have been beaten simply because we have not won a resounding victory, should so lose heart as to throw away the glory of our past achievements. 8 We ought rather to be pleased about what has happened, since it has resulted in the signal punishment of overweening prosperity and has freed us from the burden of immoderate envy. Henceforth we may view the prospect of fighting with

confidence in the full assurance that we are now entering upon a new phase of conquest. 9 As for the enemy's vaunted numerical superiority, we shall prove very much their betters in matters of discipline and organisation, provided we keep our heads. Moreover we shall be fighting against foreign intruders who will, naturally, be short of provisions, whilst we have an ample supply of them. A number of cities and strongholds will guarantee our safety if need be, whereas they will have no such guarantee to fall back on. What is more the Almighty will be on our side, since we are engaged in a wholly just struggle to defend what is ours, whilst they are ravaging the land of others. 10 There is every reason, then for extreme confidence on our part and no possible excuse for faintheartedness. Let us determine, therefore, not to give a moment's respite to the beleaguered citizens of Lucca and let each one of you bring all his energies and enthusiasm to bear effectively on the conduct of the entire campaign."

17. Having put heart into his troops by addressing them in this vein, Narses immediately set about conducting the siege of Lucca with greater strictness. At the same time he was extremely angry with the other generals. They had abandoned an advantageous position and were now in Faventia. All his careful calculations were being reversed. 2 He expected their forces to be ranged like a continuous fortification and bulwark around the city of Parma, in order to keep the enemy at bay and leave him free to bring the situation in Tuscany under control and then set out to join them there. But now, as a consequence of their having left the spot and transferred themselves to a distant location, Narses and his men were exposed to direct enemy attack. 3 Finding this situation intolerable he sent one of his closest associates, a man called Stephanus, a native of the Illyrian town of Epidamnus,[19] to the generals to upbraid them for their cowardice and to bring home to them that failure to return to their posts was tantamount to an open conviction of desertion.

4 So Stephanus set off at full speed with two hundred of the bravest and best-armed cavalrymen. Their progress was a painful combination of forced marches and sleepless nights owing to the fact that a detachment of Franks was roaming about the plains in that region in search of forage and plundering the coutryside. 5 The Romans, therefore, did most of their marching by night keeping together in close formation and protecting their rear, so that if obliged to fight it out they, should not be caught off their guard. The anguished cries of the peasantry could be heard and the lowing of cattle being driven away and the crash of trees being felled. To the dismal accompaniment of such sounds they finally made their way to Faventia and the army there.

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19 Durazzo.

6 As soon as he was in the presence of the generals Stephanus said: "What has come over you? Where now is the glory of your former achievements, and what has become of that consistent record of success in so many battles? How do you expect Narses to capture Lucca and reduce all the territory on this side of the Alps when you are behaving as though you were in collusion with the enemy, letting them through and allowing them complete freedom of movement? 7 I, for my part, have no wish to inveigh against you, but other people may well describe this whole affair as cowardice and gross neglect of duty. If you do not get back to Parma in double quick time Narses will never forgive you and, should anything go wrong, will hold you personally responsible for the consequences. Take care moreover that you do not also bring down the Emperor's wrath upon your heads".

18. When they heard these words the generals realized that they came from Narses. Unable to impugn the justice of what had been said they put forward a number of lame excuses, saying that they had been forced to change their quarters owing to the impossibility of procuring an adequate supply of food for their men in the district around Parma. They further alleged that Antiochus, the Prefect of Italy, who was in charge of these matters, had not turned up, and that they had not even received their regular pay. 2 Stephanus, therefore, having made his way to Ravenna with all speed, returned to the generals with the Prefect. After solving their problems as best he could he persuaded them all to retrace their steps immediately and encamp again in the neighbourhood of Parma. 3 His mission accomplished, he returned to Lucca and told Narses not to worry, but to give his undivided attention to the business in hand, since the enemy would cause him no further trouble. Indeed they could not possibly make a single move without being checked since the Roman forces were once again back in their proper positions and were keeping a close watch on them.

4 Narses, chafing at the thought that the citizens of Lucca might still hold out for a very long time, if the siege were continued in its present half-hearted form, closed in relentlessly on the walls. Siege-engines were brought up and fire-brands were hurled at the towers, while the archers and slingers directed their fire at anybody appearing on the battlements between the towers. Part of the wall was breached and the city was faced with imminent disaster. 5 Those who had previously been hostages exerted themselves even more strenously on behalf of the Romans, and had it been up to them the whole city would have submitted. But the Frankish garrison who were directing operations inside the city put pressure on the inhabitants, urging them to fight and repel the besiegers by force of arms. 6 Consequently they threw open the gates and directed an unexpected sortie against the Romans, thinking to overcome them in this way. But they were destined, in fact, to have only a marginal effect on the enemy whilst doing themselves incalculable

damage. What happened was that most of the local militia, already completely won over by the pro-Roman element operating inside the city, fought with deliberate cowardice. 7 In spite of repeated efforts, however, they achieved none of the results that had been hoped for, but instead beat a shameful and ignominious retreat after incurring heavy losses and, once inside the fortifications, shut themselves up more securely, determined to make no further sallies. Realizing at this juncture that there was no other way of saving themselves, they all concluded that they had no option but to adopt a conciliatory attitude and so decided upon a negotiated settlement of the situation. 8 Accordingly on receiving an assurance from Narses that he would let bygones be bygones they immediately surrendered and gladly admitted the troops. Some three months had been spent on the siege, but now they were once more subjects of the Emperor of the Romans.

19. Now that Lucca had been forced to capitulate and there was no longer any opposition Narses thought that there was no point in stopping on there any longer, not even if only to have a moment's pause from his exertions. So he left Bonus, the quaestor of Moesia on the Danube in charge, a man of exceptional sagacity with a wide experience of civil as well as military matters. Narses entrusted him with a sizable force which would enable him to quell with ease any insurrection on the part of the barbarians in that region.

After making these arrangements, then, he hurried straight to Ravenna in order to send the troops stationed there to their winter quarters. 2 The autumn had in fact already drawn to a close and these operations had dragged on into the time of the winter solstice. Consequently he felt that this was no time for campaigning. Such a policy would indeed have been likely to serve the interests of the Franks, who thrive in cold conditions and whose powers of physical energy and endurance reach their peak in winter. Being the inhabitants of a cold climate and, as it were, creatures of the cold they are naturally adapted to such conditions. On the other hand their worst enemy is the heat, since it saps their strength and undermines their spirits; so that summer is the last time they would chose to fight in. 3 In view of these considerations, therefore, he tried to delay matters and suspend hostilities until the next year.

So he then disbanded his army and ordered them to group themselves into companies and battalions and winter in the neighbouring towns and fortresses. At the beginning of spring they were all to assemble in Rome, where they would draw up in full battle-formation. 4 While they went about their business, Narses retired to Ravenna taking with him only his personal servants and bodyguard and those members of his general staff who were in charge of the paper-work and had the job of seeing that the rules and regulations were observed and preventing anyone from gaining indiscriminate

access to him. The Romans call such officials "a cancellis", a term which refers to the guichet behind which they work. 5 He was accompanied also by Zandalas, the head of his domestic retinue and by his eunuchs and the rest of his household servants. And so he took with him to Ravenna about four hundred men all told.

20. Meanwhile the Franks were in Italy and the fortunes of the Goths were now in their hands. The only person however, to understand where his future interests would lie and to grasp the full implications of their situation was Aligern, the son of Fritigern and brother of Teïas, whom I mentioned earlier on in connection with the siege of Cumae. 2 A careful assessment of the situation, in fact, led him to realise that the Franks had indeed come in response to an appeal for help, but were in reality availing themselves of an empty formula of alliance in order to mask what, in the event, would prove to be very different intentions. Assuming they did get the better of the Romans they would certainly have no intention of letting the Goths have Italy, but would in actual fact begin by enslaving the very people whose cause they were supposed to be championing. They would subject them to the rule of Frankish overlords and thus deprive them of their traditional way of life. 3 After much pondering and weighing up of the pros and cons and in view of the fact that the strain of the siege was beginning to tell on him the obvious course seemed to be to hand over the city and its wealth to Narses, renounce his barbarian connections, and secure his future by becoming a subject of the Empire. 4 He thought it only fair, that, if it were not possible for the Goths to possess Italy, its ancient inhabitants and original masters should recover it and not be perpetually deprived of their homeland. For his own part, then he resolved to pursue this policy, thereby setting all his compatriots a signal example of good sense. 5 After having first intimated to the besiegers that he wished to have a meeting with their general, and then having received permission to do so, he made his way to Classis in the district of Ravenna, where, he had learnt, was the fort in which Narses was staying. 6 As soon as he found himself face to face with Narses he handed over the keys of Cumae to him and promised to serve him with a good grace in all things. Narses congratulated him on joining the Roman side and assured him that his services would be more than amply rewarded. 7 He then gave immediate orders to a detachment of the troops encamped around Cumae to move into position inside the fortifications in order to take over the city and its treasures and to guard everything securely. The rest of the troops were to withdraw to other towns and forts so that they too might have somewhere in which to pass the winter. All his instructions were carried out.

8 The Herul army was again leaderless and the majority was split over the rival claims of two equally distinguished contestants. One body of

opinion favoured Aruth and felt that their best interests would be served by his leadership. On the other hand the military experience and forceful personality of Sindual had more appeal for others, including Narses who put him in command and sent them off too to their winter quarters.

9 Aligern he sent to Caesena [20] with instructions to climb up, as soon as he got there, and stick his head over the wall in such a way as to make himself generally conspicuous and easily recognized. The object of these instructions was that the Franks, who would be passing by that way, might on seeing that Aligern had changed sides give up the idea of marching on Cumae, together with any hope they may have had of laying their hands on its treasures. They might even perhaps abandon the entire campaign, in view of the fact that all points of vantage had already been seized in advance.

10 When Aligern saw the Franks passing by he jeered at them from the top of the wall and taunted them with the futility of any further exertions and with their failure to keep up with events. Everything of value was already in the hands of the Romans including even the royal insignia of the Goths. Any future claimant to the throne would have none of the pomp and outward symbols of majesty but would be obliged to don the garb of a common soldier and a private citizen.

11 The Franks retorted with abuse and reviled him as the traitor of his nation. Yet they began to have vague doubts about the advisability of their present policy and even wondered whether to continue with the war. The prevailing view, however, was that they should stand firm and press on with the pursuit of their original objective.

21. Meanwhile, Narses after a stay in Ravenna in the course of which he reviewed the troops stationed there and got everything properly organized set off for Ariminum [21] with the same retinue as before. 2 Vaccarus the Varne, a man outstanding for his skill and bravery in war, had recently died. His son, whose name was Theudebald, straightaway attached himself to the Emperor of the Romans, taking his followers with him. He was now in Ariminum where he was supposed to meet Narses. 3 So Narses arrived there intending to make doubly sure of their allegiance by the bestowal of a special bounty.

4 While he was busying himself with these matters a mixed cavalry and infantry force of about two thousand Franks, which had been sent by their leaders to pillage and plunder the countryside began to ravage the fields, dragging off draught animals and setting no limit to their depredations. Narses, who was seated in an upper room commanding a view of the plain, could not fail to notice what was going on. 5 Thinking it shameful and ignoble not to offer all possible resistance he rode out of the city on an obedient and well-trained thoroughbred which was capable of performing every kind of manoeu-

[20] Cesena.

[21] Rimini.

vre and military evolution. He also ordered all those members of his retinue who had some experience of fighting to follow him. There were about three hundred of them. 6 They leapt on to their horses and rode off with him, heading straight for the enemy.

When the Franks saw them approaching they did not continue to roam about scattered and dispersed, and one may safely assume that they had no further thoughts of plunder. Instead they all closed their ranks, both infantry and cavalry, and drew themselves up into a compact formation which, though not deep, (that would not have been possible given their numbers) was nevertheless a solid mass of shields regulary flanked by the converging wings of the cavalry. 7 When the Romans got within shooting-range, however, they judged it inexpedient to engage in close combat when the enemy were drawn up in such perfect formation. They began therefore to discharge their arrows and to hurl their javelins in an attempt to shoot down the men in the first ranks and thus thin out the enemy front. 8 But they stood firm and immovable behind a wall of shields, protected on every side since they had the good fortune to be next to a thick forest, the trees serving them as a sort of defensive bulwark. And now they even began to fight back by hurling their "angones", as their native spears are called.

22. Taking stock of the situation and realizing that the enemy were suffering no casualities Narses resorted to a barbarian stratagem which is practised more commonly by the Huns. He ordered his attendants to turn their horses right round and retreat at a furious gallop as though fleeing in terror, in order to lure the Franks as far away as possible from the grove and on to the open plain. They were to leave the rest to him. 2 So they followed his instructions and fled. The Franks were deceived by their flight and supposing their fear to be genuine confidently broke up their ranks at once, left the forest and set off in hot pursuit. 3 The cavalry sallied forth first with the bravest and swiftest of the infantry following. All pressed on relentlessly, thinking to take Narses alive in no time and thus with little exertion to bring the whole war to its desired conclusion. 4 Lost to all sense of discipline and throwing all caution to the winds they advanced chaotically in an access of wild exultation and extravagant hope. Giving the reins to their horses the Romans sped on looking for all the world like panic-stricken fugitives. So convincingly did they play their parts! 5 When the barbarians were already scattered about on the open plain and separated by a very great distance from the forest the Romans, at a signal from their general, suddenly wheeled themselves and their horses round and confronted their pursuers head-on. Taking advantage of the confusion and panic engendered by the unexpected turn of events the Romans laid about them in all directions and ran the enemy down. The rôles of fugitive and pursuer were abruptly reversed.

6 The Frankish cavalry, apprehending the danger they were in, galloped back towards the wood at full speed and were only too glad to make for the safety of their camp. But their infantry were ingloriously butchered. So hopelessly stunned and crazed were they by the unexpectedness of the catastrophe that they did not lift a finger to help themselves. They lay all about in pitiful heaps slaughtered like a herd of swine or cattle. 7 When these their bravest men had been slain (there were more than nine hundred of them) the others retreated and returned to their leaders, convinced that is would no longer be safe for them to be separated from the main body.

8 Narses returned to Ravenna. After organizing everything there on a sound and efficient basis he set out for Rome, where he passed the winter.

BOOK 2

1. At the beginning of spring all the armies converged on Rome and assembled there in accordance with their instructions. 2 Narses subjected them to a more rigorous combat training and strengthened their fighting spirit by daily drill. He made them march at the double, practise regular evolutions on horseback, perform elaborate whirling movements in the manner of a war- dance and expose their ears to frequent blasts of the bugle sounding the signal for battle, lest after a winter of inactivity they might forget the arts of war and lose their nerve when faced with real fighting.

3 Meanwhile, the barbarians marched at a slower pace ravaging and destroying all that lay in their path. Bypassing the city of Rome and its environs by the most inland route possible they advanced with the Tyrrhenian Sea on their right and the shores of the Ionian Sea extending to their left. When they reached the region called Samnium[1] they split up into two groups, each one following a different itinerary. Butilinus advanced along the Tyrrhenian coast with the largest and strongest part of the army and ravaged most of Campania, crossed over into Lucania and then attacked Bruttium[2] continuing his advance as far as the strait which separates the island of Sicily and the tip of Italy. 5 The job of ravaging Apulia and Calabria[3] fell to Leutharis, who took the remaining forces with him and got as far as Hydruntum,[4] which is situated on the Adriatic coast at the point where the Ionian Sea begins.

6 Those among the invaders who were Franks showed restraint and respect towards the churches, as was to be expected since, as I have already pointed out, they held orthodox views in matters of religion, and were of more or less the same persuasion as the Romans. 7 But the Alamanni, whose beliefs were quite different, pillaged the churches with complete abandon and robbed them of their precious ornaments. They removed and appropriated for profane use large numbers of fonts, solid gold censers, chalices, baskets[5] and whatever other objects are set apart for the performance of the sacred mysteries. 8 They went even further than that,

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1 Ancient district on the Apennine uplands S. E. of Rome.

2 Region in the toe of Italy corresponding roughly to modern Calabria.

3 Now Terra d'Otranto in the heel of Italy.

4 Otranto.

5 Probably containing the unconsecrated bread or "antidoron" distributed at the end of the Liturgy.

tearing down the roofs of the churches and shrines and uprooting the bases of the altars. The chapels and the empty spaces enclosing the altars reeked with blood and the fields were polluted with the foul contagion of ubiquitous unburied corpses. 9 But retribution was swift and terrible. Some were killed in war, others died of disease and not one of them lived to enjoy the fulfilment of his earlier hopes; which affords a striking example of how evil-doing and ungodliness bring nothing but misery in their train and must at all times be avoided, most of all in time of war. 10 It is both a sacred and a noble duty to fight for the preservation of one's country and one's national identity and to do one's utmost to repel all those who seek to destroy these things. But people who with no just cause but merely out of greed and irrational spite go about invading the land of others and harming those who have done them no wrong can only be described as wicked and vicious. Such men are as indifferent to civilized standards of behaviour as they are to the divine retribution attendant on their misdeeds. 11 Condign punishment and inevitable doom await them, and whatever apparent prosperity they may enjoy is of short duration, as witness the fate of Leutharis and Butilinus and their fellow barbarians.

2. By the time they had perpetrated these acts and appropriated a great quantity of loot spring had already gone and the summer was advancing towards its prime. One of the two leaders, Leutharis to be precise, wanted at this stage to return home and enjoy himself. Accordingly he sent messengers to his brother and urged him to say goodbye to the hazards and uncertainties of war and join him in returning as quickly as possible. 2 But, partly because he had given the Goths a solemn undertaking to assist them in their struggle against the Romans and partly because they kept flattering him and loudly proclaiming their intention of making him their king, Butilinus felt himself obliged to stay on and fulfil the terms of the agreement. So he stayed where he was and started to make preparations for war.

3 Leutharis set off immediately with his troops. He had made up his mind that, as soon as he returned safely with the booty, he would send his men to act as a relief-force to his brother. But, in the event, he managed neither to achieve his designs nor to render his brother any assistance.

4 Returning by the same route as he had come he got as far as Picenum without encountering any resistance. In the course of his progress through that region he encamped near the city of Fanum.[6] Whereupon he immediately dispatched, as was his usual procedure, a force of about three thousand men who were to act both as scouts and as an advance guard, not just to discover what lay ahead of them but also to beat off a possible attack should the enemy be sighted anywhere.

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[6] Fano.

5 Artabanes and Uldach the Hun had joined forces, with a Roman and a Hunish army respectively, in the city of Pisaurum[7] and were on the look out in case the Franks should pass by that route. As soon as they saw the advance guard of the enemy actually walking on the shore of the Ionian coast they slipped out of the city and launched a sudden but well ordered attack, cutting them down in great numbers. Some of the enemy scrambled up the steep rooks that bordered the coast, only to tumble headlong to their deaths and be swept away by the waves. 6 The coastline, in fact, at that point rises abruptly and forms a sort of hill which is not accessible from all sides and affords a far-from-easy descent to those who reach its summit, being for the most part a slippery incline pitted with holes and leading to a bottomless expanse of whirling water.

7 Most of their number perished in the manner described while the rest fled in disorder at the sight, uttering loud lamentations as they went. Then they burst into their camp spreading panic and confusion and conveying the impression that the Romans would be upon them at any moment. 8 Leutharis got up to marshal his forces in person and the whole army was alerted. They took up their arms and ranged themselves into a wide column. Once they had placed themselves in this position, all other considerations were banished by the urgency of the situation. Most of the prisoners suddenly finding themselves unguarded lost no time in taking advantage of the fact that the enemy were fully occupied. They made their escape as quickly as possible to the nearby forts and took with them as much of the booty as they could.

3. When Artabanes and Uldach (they felt they were in no position to give battle) showed no sign of leading out their forces, the Franks dispersed and returned to camp. On looking around them they realised the extent of their losses. They decided therefore that their best policy would be to leave Fanum with all speed and continue their march before anything else happened to them. 2 So they set out at once and, leaving the Ionian Sea and the coastal route on their right, marched towards the foot-hills of the Apennines. Thus, heading straight for Emilia and the Cottian Alps, they crossed the Po with some difficulty. 3 On reaching the district of Venice they encamped in the town of Ceneta,[8] which at that time was subject to them. In spite of the security the place afforded them their mood was angry and sullen, their disgruntlement evident and extreme. Practically nothing remained of their loot and it appeared that their labours had been completed in vain. 4 But that was not the end of their troubles. Not long after, they were decimated by a sudden outbreak of plague. 5 Some pronounced the air of the region to be contaminated and held it responsible for the disease. Others blamed

[7] Pesaro.

[8] Ceneda.

the abrupt change in their mode of life, because after a routine of forced marches and frequent fighting they had fallen into habits of luxury and indolence. But they failed utterly to perceive what had really caused the disaster and in fact made it inevitable, to wit the ruthless wickedness with which they had flouted the laws of God and man.

6 In the person of their leader the marks of divine punishment were particularly manifest. His mind became unhinged and he began to rave like a madman. He was seized with a violent ague and let out a series of low-pitched groaning noises. One moment he would fall prostrate with his face to the ground, another time he would tumble over backwards foaming at the mouth and with his eyes horribly contorted. 7 In a paroxysm of insane fury the wretched man actually began to eat his own limbs, fastening on to his arms with his teeth and rending and devouring the flesh like a wild beast licking clean a putrifying wound. And so feasting on his own flesh he gradually wasted away and died a most pitiful death. 8 The others too were dying like flies and the pestilence continued to rage until the whole army was wiped out. Most of them, though racked with fever, remained lucid to the very end. Some were struck down by a violent seizure, others fell into a swoon, while others still succumbed to delirium. The malady, in fact, assumed a variety of forms, each one fatal. This then was the disastrous outcome of the expedition of Leutharis and his men.

4. While these events were taking place in the region of Venice, Butilinus, the other leader, was hurrying back via Campania and Rome, after having ravaged nearly every town and fort as far as the Straits of Messina. 2 He had heard that Narses and the imperial forces were gathered together in Rome and therefore did not wish to delay or allow himself to be diverted any further. Since a considerable part of his army had already been struck down and destroyed by disease he resolved to throw in all his forces in one last desperate bid for supremacy.

3 What had happened was that when summer was over and autumn beginning and the vines were laden with fruit they had been driven for want of other foodstuffs (Narses had very cleverly requisitioned everything in advance) to pluck the grapes and squeeze out the juice with their hands. As a result of filling themselves with this improvised wine their bellies swelled up and were affected with a flux. Some died there and then, others survived. 4 Butilinus decided therefore to give battle, whatever the outcome, before the disease became an epidemic. So on reaching Campania he encamped not far from Capua on the banks of the river Casulinus[9] which flows from the Apennines, winds through the plains of that region and discharges into the Tyrrhenian Sea. 5 Having stationed his army there he had a strong line of earthworks built around them, the effectiveness of which, however, de-

[9] Volturno

pended on the nature of the terrain, since the river which flowed to his right seemed to constitute a natural barrier against attack. He had brought great numbers of wagons with him. Taking off their wheels and fitting them together rim to rim in a continuous line he stuck their felloes into the ground and covered them with earth right up to the hubs, so that only a half circle of wheel protruded above ground-level in each case. 6 After barricading his entire camp with these and numerous other wooden objects he left a narrow exit unfenced, to allow them to sally forth against the enemy and return again as they wished. 7 The bridge over the river constituted a possible source of trouble if left unguarded. So he seized it in advance and built a wooden tower on it in which he placed as many as he could of his best armed soldiers and his finest fighting men so that they might do battle from a safe point of vantage and repel the Romans should they decide to cross over.

8 Having arranged each particular as described he felt that adequate measures had been taken and that he had made himself master of the situation. The initiative in the fighting would rest with him alone and the battle would take place when, and only when, he wished it. 9 He had not yet received any intelligence of what had happened to his brother in Venetia but he was surprised that he had not sent his army as had been agreed. He surmised, however, that they would not have delayed so long unless some dire calamity had befallen them. But even without their assistance he thought he could beat the enemy, since he was still superior to them in numbers. 10 His remaining forces amounted to thirty thousand fighting men all told. The strength of the Romans was scarcely eighteen thousand.

5. Butilinus himself was in high spirits and urged all his men to consider that the impending struggle would be decisive. "We are faced", he said, "with the alternative either of becoming the masters of Italy, which was our object in coming here, or of being annihilated on the spot. It is in our power, my brave soldiers, providing we fight courageously, to achieve the fulfilment of our ambitions. Can there be any doubt about which alternative we should choose?".

2 He kept on exhorting the troops in this strain and succeeded in boosting their morale considerably. Each in his own way, they began to make ready their weapons. In one place axes in large numbers were being sharpened and in another, the native spears or "angones" as they are called. Elsewhere broken shields were being mended and pressed into service. 3 All their preparations proceeded with ease since as a nation their style of fighting-equipment is simple and of a kind which does not require a variety of mechanical skills for its maintainance but can, I believe, be put right, in case of damage, by the men themselves who wear it. They are ignorant of the use of breastplates and greaves and most of them fight with their heads unprotected,

though there are a few who wear helmets. Back and chest are bare as far as the waist, the legs being encased in linen or leather trousers. 4 Rarely if ever do they use horses, being adepts in infantry fighting, which is the customary mode of warfare of their nation. They wear a sword slung from the thigh and a shield hanging at the left side. Bows and arrows, slings and other weapons capable of hitting a distant target form no part of their equipment. Two-headed axes and their "angones" are in fact the arms with which they do most of their fighting. 5 Angones are spears which are neither especially short nor especially long, but can be used both as javelins and, if need be, as thrusting weapons in close combat. They are almost entirely encased in iron so that very little of the wood shows through and even the spike at the butt end of the spear is partly concealed. At the top of the spearpoint, presumably on either side of the spear-head itself, curved barbs project and are bent round, not unlike fish-hooks. 6 Now your Frank throws this ango of his in the midst of the fray. If it strikes any part of the body then the point goes in, of course, and it is no easy task either for the wounded man or for anybody else to pull out the spear. The barbs prevent it, sticking to the flesh and making the pain more agonizing, so that even if it should happen that the enemy has not been mortally wounded he still dies. 7 If it pierces a shield then it remains attached to it with the butt-end trailing on the ground. The man whose shield has been hit is unable to pull out the spear because its barbs are embedded in his shield. He cannot hack it off with his sword, either, because the interposing layers of iron prevent him from getting to the wood. 8 As soon as he perceives this the Frank puts his foot out suddenly and stepping onto the butt weighs the shield down, so that the man holding it loosens his grip and his head and chest are left unprotected. He then makes short work of his defenceless victim either striking him in the front part of the face with an axe or driving another spear through his windpipe. 9 This then is the type of equipment the Franks have and the manner in which they were preparing for battle.

6. On learning of these preparations Narses left Rome with his entire army and encamped so close to the enemy that he could both hear the noise they were making and see clearly the outlines of their fortification. 2 With the armies in full sight of each other there was a great bustle of warlike preparations. Guards were patrolling in large numbers, sentries were posted at frequent intervals and the generals kept inspecting their men. There were all the usual contradictory emotions which beset men on the eve of a great battle. The mood alternated rapidly on either side between the extremes of hope and fear. The cities of Italy were in a state of feverish excitement and suspense, wondering into whose hands they would fall.

3 Meanwhile the Franks were ravaging the neighbouring villages and openly bringing in provisions for themselves. When Narses saw this he

regarded it as a personal disgrace and was furious at the idea of the camp-followers and scullions of the enemy nonchalantly strolling about right under their very noses and acting as though no one were in sight to challenge them. He felt that this state of affairs should no longer be tolerated and resolved to do everything in his power to put a stop to it.

4 Among the Roman commanders was a certain Armenian called Chanaranges, a man of the utmost bravery and good sense and one who would gladly face danger whenever the occasion warranted it. Chanaranges, as it happened, had pitched his tent at the far end of the camp very near to the enemy. Narses now instructed him to attack the wagoners and do them as much damage as he could, in order to deter them from conducting any further foraging expeditions. 5 He suddenly rode off therefore, with a few of his men, intercepted the wagons and killed their drivers. One of the wagons was loaded with hay. He now brought it up to the tower which, as I have already mentioned, the Franks had constructed to guard the bridge, and set fire to the hay. 6 There was a great burst of flame and the tower's wooden structure was easily enveloped. The barbarians posted inside, unable to offer any resistance and on the point of being themselves engulfed by the flames, decided to abandon their position. They barely managed to get clear in time and fled to their camp, leaving the Romans in control of the bridge.

7 Not surprisingly the Franks were thrown into turmoil by these events and rushed to arms, seething with frenzied impatience and rage. Their blood was up and they could no longer contain themselves. With extravagant daring and inordinate self-confidence they resolved not to brook another moment's inaction or delay but to give battle that very day, in spite of the explicit pronouncement of the Alamannic soothsayers that they should not fight on that day, or else they must expect to be wiped out completely. 8 Personally I think that even if the encounter had taken place on the day after or on some other day they would have suffered precisely the same fate as befell them on that occasion. A change of date would not have sufficed to exempt them from paying in full the penalty of their impiety. 9 Still, whether it was mere coincidence or whether the Alamannic seers might conceivably have somehow discerned the pattern of future events their prediction was, in the opinion of many, neither idle nor unfulfilled. I shall now give without further delay as accurate an account as is in my power of each consecutive occurrence.

7. The Franks were in a fighting mood. Their weapons were already in their hands, Narses made his men arm too and instructed them to leave camp and to take up position in proper formation somewhere on no man's land.

2 When the army had begun to march and the general had already mounted his horse word was brought to him that one of the most prominent

of the Herul chiefs had brutally murdered a servant for some trifling offence. Stopping his horse immediately he had the murderer brought before him. It would, he felt, be impious to march into battle without first removing the guilty stain by some act of atonement. 3 In answer to his enquiries the barbarian admitted full responsibility for what had been done and even went so far as to say that masters were at liberty to dispose of their own slaves as they wished and that if the others did not behave themselves they too would receive similar treatment. Since it seemed that, far from feeling any remorse, the murderous brute was actually boasting of his criminal conduct, Narses gave orders to his bodyguard to run the fellow through. 4 A sword pierced his belly and he lay dead.

There was the usual barbarian reaction from the rank and file of the Herul army. They quarrelled and sulked and decided to take no part in the fighting. 5 Narses, however, having removed all stain of guilt did not give the Heruls any further thought. He set off for the battlefield after giving notice that whoever wished to share in the victory must follow him. So great was his confidence in the aid of the divinty that he marched out to battle with the conviction of foreordained success.

6 Sindual, the leader of the Heruls, thought it would be to their shame and disgrace if he and his men were to prove guilty of desertion when such a great battle was in progress. Moreover people might think that in reality they were afraid of the enemy, and were using their affection for the dead man as a pretext and a cloak for their cowardice. 7 Unable, therefore, to bear the thought of refraining from active participation he signalled to Narses to wait for them, since they would be joining him any moment. Narses, however, said that he could not wait, but that he would see to it that they should take their proper places in the field even if they were a bit late in arriving. And so the Heruls armed themselves thoroughly and marched out in an orderly fashion.

8. As soon as Narses reached the battlefield he made the regular tactical arrangements and dispositions of his troops. The cavalry were placed on the wings at either side, carrying short spears, and shields, while a bow and arrows and a sword hung at their sides. A few of them held pikes. 2 He himself took his stand at the tip of the right wing, Zandalas the chief of his retainers and all the menials and camp-followers who were capable of bearing arms were there too. 3 On the other side were Valerian and Artabanes and their men with instructions to hide themselves for a time in the thick of the wood and then as soon as the enemy charged to emerge from their place of concealment and attack them on both sides. 4 The infantry occupied all the ground in the centre. The men in the van clad in mail right down to their feet and wearing especially strong helmets formed a solid wall of shields. The others stood shoulder to shoulder in successive rows, the

parallel arrangement extending as far as the rearguard. 5 All the light-armed troops, slingers and bowmen tagged on behind biding their time to shoot. A place had been reserved for the Heruls in the middle of the phalanx, and it was still empty since they had not yet arrived.

6 Meanwhile two Heruls who had already deserted to the enemy some time before and were, in consequence, ignorant of Sindual's later decision were exhorting the barbarians to attack the Romans as quickly as possible. "You will find them", they said, "in complete disarray, with the Herul contingent sullenly refusing to take any part in the action and the other troops thoroughly disheartened by its defection".

7 Doubtless because that was what he wished them to be, Butilinus had little difficulty in accepting these words as true. He led out his men immediately. Their enthusiasm knew no bounds. In a flutter of excitement at the news they had received they all made straight for the Romans. Their advance however, was not a deliberate and ordered progress but a wild and impetuous rush, as though they thought that the mere sound of their voices would be enough to crush all opposition.

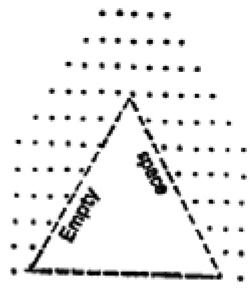
8 The disposition of their forces was in the shape of a wedge. It was like a triangular figure resembling the letter delta, [10] the pointed part in front being a dense and compact mass of shields, which presented the appearance of a boar's head. 9 The legs of the figure, formed by rows and columns stretching back obliquely, gradually grew farther and farther apart until finally it reached a very great width, so that the space in between was empty revealing the backs of the men in a continuous unprotected line. This configuration was the result of a progressive fanning out aimed at enabling them to meet the enemy head on, to fight in safety by covering themselves with their shields and to use their converging formation to guard their rear. [11]

9. But all went well for Narses since fortune lent a hand to his excellent generalship. The barbarians charging full tilt and raising a terrific din as they went struck the Roman ranks with a violent impact. They immediately dislodged the centre of the van and went careering into the empty space left by the absence of the Heruls. [12] The spearhead of the enemy's forces cut

[10] i. e. Δ

[11] ——

[12] The following is the only figure that can be reconciled with each individual point made in Agathias' description:



clean through the ranks, though without causing many casualties, and swept on past the rearguard. Some of them advanced still futher in an attempt to take the Roman camp. 2 At this point Narses quietly instructed the wings to turn round, performing what in military parlance is termed a right about turn, and to extend themselves somewhat. The mounted bowmen were to fire their arrows crosswise from either side into the backs of the enemy. 3 They had no difficulty in following these instructions. Being on horseback they overtopped the barbarians, who were on foot, and it was extremely easy for them to hit a target which was some distance away, spread out and clear of obstacles. Nor was it, I imagine, at all difficult for the horsemen on the flanks to shoot their arrows over the heads of that part of the enemy on their side which was nearest to them and to wound those on the far side whenever they came into sight. 4 Indeed the Franks were pierced in the back from all sides, with the Romans on the right wing picking off the enemy on the left and those on the left wing picking off the enemy on the right. Thus the arrows were virtually invisible as they flew through the air in reciprocally opposite directions destroying whoever lay in their path. The barbarians were quite helpless, being unable to defend themselves and not even having any clear idea from where they were being shot at. 5 Since they were standing face to face with the Romans with their attention concentrated only on their immediate surroundings, engaged as they were in hand-to-hand fighting with the heavy-armed troops in front of them, they did not even so much as catch a glimpse of the mounted bowmen stationed behind them. Furthermore they were being hit in the back and not in the chest and so had no means of ascertaining the true nature of their plight. 6 Many of them were struck dead on the instant before they even had time to ask themselves what was happening. As those on the outside kept falling those on the inside were successively exposed to view and since this occurred repeatedly their numbers were rapidly thinned out and dwindled into insignificance.

7 Meanwhile Sindual and his Heruls met, on approaching the scene of battle, with those of the enemy who had broken through the Roman ranks and were charging on ahead. 8 As soon as they were at close quarters they engaged them. The enemy were taken unawares and thrown into confusion. Thinking they had fallen into an ambush they took immediately to flight, blaming the Herul deserters and accusing them of having deceived them. Sindual and his men followed hard on their heels, not slackening his pursuit until he had slain some and driven others into the eddying waters of the river.

9 Once the Heruls were in their place the empty space was filled in and the Roman ranks were closed up, with the result that the Franks, being

virtually caught in a net, were slaughtered on all sides. Their ranks completely broken they were rolled back on themselves in a hopeless rout.

10 The Romans did not dispatch them with arrows only but both heavy-armed and light-armed troops joined in the onslaught, hurling their javelins, running them through with their pikes and cutting them to pieces with their swords, while the cavalry outflanked them cutting them off and hemming them in. Those who escaped death by the sword were driven into the river by their pursuers and went to a watery grave. Cries of lamentation filled the air as the barbarians perished miserably. 11 Butilinus their chief and his whole army were wiped out and the Heruls who had deserted before the battle were numbered among the slain. Indeed only five out of the entire Teutonic host managed to escape and return to their ancestral abodes. 12 What clearer proof could there be that they were punished for their wickedness and overtaken by the relentless operation of divine justice? That vast throng of Franks and Alamanni and all the others who flocked to their standards met with complete annihilation, whereas only eighty of the Romans lost their lives, and they were the men who sustained the first shock of the enemy attack. 13 In this battle practically everybody in the Roman ranks showed conspicuous bravery. Among the barbarian auxiliaries Aligern the Goth (he too took part in the battle) and Sindual the captain of the Heruls acquitted themselves with as much gallantry as any man. All were full of praise and admiration for Narses and felt that it was thanks to his foresight that they had distinguished themselves.

10. Scarcely, I imagine, have past ages produced another example of such signal and overwhelming victory. And if other men have, in the past, suffered a similar fate to the Franks, closer inspection reveals that they too were destroyed because of their wickedness. 2 Take Datis, for instance, the satrap of Darius, who in olden times arrived at Marathon with a Persian army thinking that he was bound to subdue not just Attica but the whole of Greece. The attack was immoral and unjustifiable and was motivated solely by the territorial ambitions of the Persian monarch Darius. The continent of Asia was, apparently, not big enough for him and he greatly resented the idea of not being master of Europe too. 3 That then is the reason why the Persians suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Militiades. The story goes that the Athenians promised to sacrifice to Artemis, the Goddess of the Chase, a kid for every man of the enemy slain and that she bestowed her favour upon them so bountifully and they enjoyed such abundant hunting that even when they resorted to sacrificing goats they could not make up the number. So heavy were the enemy's losses in that battle! 4 Or take the celebrated Xerxes and his marvels,[13] how else did he come to suffer defeat

[13] Agathias is no doubt thinking of the bridging of the Hellespont and the digging of a canal through the isthmus north of Mount Athos. Both of these incidents became in

at the hands of the Greeks than because in his abandoned wickedness he set out to enslave men who had done him no wrong and putting might before right relied rather on force of numbers and equipment than on discretion, whereas the Greeks were fighting in a just cause for their own freedom and, neglecting nothing that it was in their power to do, they took all the appropriate decisions and acted upon them? 5 How, for instance, could one account for the trophies of Gylippus the Spartan, the defeat of Nicias and Demosthenes and the whole Syracusan disaster save in terms of folly and wickedness? For, what reason did the Athenians have for neglecting the war on their doorstep and sailing away to ravage distant Sicily. 6 One could easily cite many other instances of enterprises born of stupidity and wickedness and of the harmful consequences they have for those who carry them through, but I think that what has been said should prove sufficient in the circumstances.

7 The Romans, then, (to return to my previous narrative) after burying their dead according to their own rites and customs stripped the enemy and collected a huge quantity of arms. They also knocked down the defensive works of the enemy and plundered their camp. Laden with booty, crowned with the laurels of victory, and singing songs of triumph they led their general back in state to Rome.

8 All the neighbourhood of Capua as far as the outlying districts presented the spectacle of fields running with blood and the riverside flooded with an overflow of corpses. I have it on the authority of a native of those parts that an anonymous poem in elegiacs was inscribed on a stone pillar erected near the bank of the river and that it ran as follows:

"The Casulinus lodged its freight of corpses here,
where its currents cross Tyhrrenian shores
— the Frankish hordes that fell to the Ausonian spear
and followed Butilinus and his cause.
Ah happy stream, oh carnage more than trophies dear,
long-reddened by their blood the water pours".

9 Whether this poem was really engraved on a stone or whether it was simply passed on by word of mouth until it reached me, I see no reason for not transcribing it here. It might perhaps serve as a not inelegant testimony to the course of this battle.

11. In the meantime news of the fate of Leutharis and his men in Venetia reached the Romans. Whereupon both civilians and soldiers gave themselves up to still more frequent and sustained bouts of merry-making and jollification, fondly imagining that they would not have to face any further opposition and that they would spend the rest of their days in peace. Now that the enemy who invaded Italy had met with such wholesale destruction

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Greek rhetorical tradition stock examples of human arrogance seeking to subvert the natural order of things.

they 2 did not think that there would be any more invasions; that, at any rate, was what the rank and file, with their characteristic inability to divine the true nature of affairs, their propensity for indolence and their habit of judging everything according to their own pleasure-seeking standards, thought. 3 Narses, however, made a detailed and penetrating assessment of the situation and concluded that it would be sheer madness to imagine that they would have no further struggless to undergo, but could settle down to a changed existence of blissful and increasing self-indulgence. It only remained, I fancy, for them to sell, in their stupidity, their shields and helmets for a flagon of wine or a lyre, so superfluous and useless for any future contingency did they consider their weapons to be. 4 Their general, however, saw clearly that, in all probability, there would be more wars with the Franks, and was afraid that the Romans might so undermine their morale through soft living, that when the moment for action came they might succumb to cowardice and refuse to face danger. 5 And indeed his worst fears might soon have been realized had he not deemed it opportune to call his men together and address them in noble and rousing tones, in order to bring them back to their senses, restore their courage, curb their vanity and curtail their conceit. And so when they were all gathered together he stood in their midst and delivered the following speech:

12. "The experience of sudden and unprecedented prosperity does tend by its very unfamiliarity to confuse people and to make them lose their sense of proportion, and this is especially so if the element of surprise is accompanied by an element of undeserved success. 2 But if someone were to accuse you of acting out of character, what excuse could you offer? That you have now tasted victory, and that the sensation is a novel one? You, who rid the world of Totila and Teïas and the entire Gothic nation! Is it, then, that you are experiencing a disproportionate measure of success? What measure of prosperity, however great, could match the fame of Roman arms? To triumph forever over our enemies is our birthright and ancestral privilege. 3 You are victorious, therefore, and deservedly so, as your actions and achievements have amply demonstrated. These things do not accrue to you from a life of ease and pleasure, but are the result of manifold endurance and exertion and of long schooling in the hazards of war. 4 You must, therefore, persist in your former determination, not just confining yourselves to the enjoyment of your present prosperity but also taking steps to ensure its continuance into the future. Whoever fails to take these factors into consideration deprives success of a lasting basis and discovers all too often that the tide of fortune has turned against him. 5 The fate of the Franks, which now fills you with justifiable pride, should serve as an object-lesson. Their affairs were prospering for a time until in a fit of arrogance and presumption they waged war against us, not having sufficient foresight

to realize the wild improbability of their aims. The result, as you know, has been total annihilation, a fate consummated by our arms but caused by their folly.

6 It would indeed be shameful, fellow Romans, if you were to suffer the same fate as the barbarians and not to outshine them as much by your superior intelligence as you do in physical prowess. And let none of you imagine that all your foes have been destroyed and that there will be no more enemies to fight. Yet, even if this were really the case, that would be no reason for allowing yourselves to go to seed and surrendering all decency. 7 But no effort of the imagination could make the true situation coincide with your illusions. The Franks are a great and populous nation and extremely well-versed in the art of war. A tiny fraction of them has been defeated, too small to inspire them with fear, but large enough to provoke them to anger. It is unlikely, then, that they will remain inactive and gulp down the insult in silence. Indeed it is much more likely that they will return shortly with a larger army to resume the fighting against us. 8 Resolve, therefore, to banish idleness now and to renew your martial qualities, bringing them to an even higher pitch of perfection than before, seeing that you must face the prospect of stiffer opposition for the future than you have encountered in the past. 9 If you persist in this resolve, then, even should they appear on the scene very shortly, they will find you in a state of complete preparedness the moment they strike. Whereas, in the event of their giving up the idea altogether, (since we must reckon with both possibilities) your safety will be assured and you will be seen to have adopted the best policy".

10 These words of exhortation from Narses filled the army with shame and remorse at their irresponsible behaviour. And so, curbing every impulse to riotous and disorderly conduct, they returned to their traditional ways.

13. A detachment of Goths, numbering about seven thousand men, which had assisted the Franks in various places, concluded that the Romans would not slacken in their offensive but would soon be attacking them too, and withdrew immediately to the fortress of Campsa.[14] 2 The place was particularly secure and well fortified since it was situated at the top of a steep hill, with an array of boulders stretching out in all directions and rising sheer about the summit, which rendered it inaccessible to enemy assault.

Once these Goths had gathered together in this place they felt safe and had not the slightest intention of capitulating to the Romans. Indeed they were determined to fight back with all their might and main should anyone attack them. 3 The man who urged and incited them to adopt this course, was a barbarian called Ragnaris, who though neither a kinsman nor a compatriot was their leader. He belonged, in fact, to a Hunnic tribe called

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14 Perhaps modern Conza, about fifty miles east of Naples.

the Bitgors. He achieved his pre-eminent position through his skill and cunning and capacity to acquire personal influence by all means both fair and foul. Now he was planning to resume hostilities in the hope of thereby enhancing his own prestige.

4 Narses, at once, marched against them with all his forces. But since it was impossible to get near the fort by launching a sudden attack and there was no question of fighting it out on disadvantageous terrain, he settled down to a regular siege, guarding every possible supply point, in order to make sure that nothing whatsoever should be conveyed to the men inside and to deter them from venturing forth at will. 5 The barbarians, however, did not suffer any real harm as a result of this policy, being, in fact, possessed of an abundance of provisions, since all their stores and most valuable possessions had previously been brought to this fort, which they held to be impregnable.

6 Nevertheless the fact of being besieged by the Romans was a source of annoyance to them and they felt that it would be a great indignity if they were going to be confined and shut up in an enclosed space for an indefinite period. So they made frequent sorties against the enemy, hoping that they might succeed in driving them away from the place, but the fighting was undistinguished and inconclusive.

14. After winter had been spent on these operations Ragnaris decided that he should call for a discussion of terms with Narses. Having been granted permission for a parley he appeared escorted by a few men and the two met somewhere in no man's land and had a lengthy discussion. 2 But the spectacle of Ragnaris puffed up with conceit, boasting extravagantly, making outrageous demands and generally adopting a high and mighty attitude decided Narses to break off the meeting unconditionally and send him away without further ado. 3 But, when he had already got to the top of the hill and was not far from the wall of the fort, stealthily and without making a sound he drew his bow and, furious at the failure of his plans, turned round and shot an arrow straight at Narses. He missed. The arrow flew wide of its mark and fell to the ground without harming anyone. 4 But the barbarian was quickly punished for his treachery. Angered at his insolence Narses' body-guard shot at him. The wretch was wounded mortally, his inevitable deserts for perpetrating such a foul piece of treachery. With difficulty his escort carried him into the fortress. 5 He lingered on there for two days and then died an ignominious death, which was the fitting conclusion of his insane perfidy.

6 After his death the Goths, thinking that they were no longer in a position to withstand the siege, requested Narses to provide them with an assurance that he would not deprive them of their lives. As soon as they

received a sworn undertaking to that effect they immediately surrendered themselves and the fort.

7 Narses put none of them to death, since, apart from the fact that he had given his word not to, it would have been unthinkable to kill in cold blood a defeated enemy. To prevent them from stirring up any further trouble, however, he sent them all to the Emperor in Constantinople.

8 While these events were in progress the young Theudobald, who ruled over the Franks whose territory adjoined Italy, (as I explained earlier on) died most wretchedly from the ravages of a congenital disease.

Custom required that Childebert and Chlotar, being his next of kin, should succeed the lad. But immediately a violent feud, of such intensity that it threatened to have a detrimental effect on the nation as a whole, broke out between them.

9 Childebert was already aged and infirm and his whole body had withered and wasted away as a result of an acute debility. Furthermore he was devoid of male issue, having only daughters to succeed him. 10 Chlotar, on the other hand, was still vigorous and had not aged much, the first wrinkles being just barely discernible. Moreover he had four strapping sons who were brimming over with energy and daring. Consequently Chlotar insisted that his brother should relinquish his claim to Theudobald's estate, in view of the fact that it would not be long before Childebert's kingdom too devolved upon him and his sons. 11 He was not disappointed in his hopes. The old man, in fact, voluntarily resigned his share of the inheritance, through fear, no doubt, of the other man's power and because he wished to avoid incurring his enemity. Not long after, he died, leaving Chlotar the sole ruler of the Franks. This then was the situation in Italy and the state of affairs among the Franks.

15. In summer time, roughly during the same period,[15] there was a violent earthquake in Constantinople and in many parts of the Empire, with the result that several cities both on the islands and the mainland were razed to the ground and their inhabitants wiped out. 2 The lovely city of Berytus,[16] the jewel of Phoenicia, was completely ruined and its world-famous architectural treasures were reduced to a heap of rubble, practically nothing but the bare pavements of the buildings being left.

3 Many of the local inhabitants were crushed to death under the weight of the wreckage, as were many cultivated young men of distinguished parentage who had come there to study the Law. There was, in fact, a long tradition of legal studies in the city, and the law schools conferred an aura of peculiar privilege and distinction on the place.

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15 551 A. D.

16 Beyrut.

4 At this point, then, the professors of law moved to the neighbouring city of Sidon and the schools were transferred there, until Berytus was rebuilt. The restored city was very different from what it had been in the past, though it was not changed beyond recognition, since it still preserved a few traces of its former self. But this rebuilding of the city and the subsequent return of the schools was not to take place for some time yet.

5 At that time also some slight tremors were felt in the great metropolis of Alexandria on the Nile, an altogether unusual occurrence for those parts. 6 All the inhabitants and particularly the very old were amazed at this apparently unprecedented phenomenon. Nobody stayed indoors. The populace congregated in the streets, seized with unwarranted panic at the suddenness and novelty of the event.

7 I myself was in Alexandria at the time completing the prescribed studies[17] which lead to the law course proper, and I must confess I was quite overcome with fear considering the faintness of the tremors. What really worried me, though, was the fact that people's houses there are not at all strongly-built and quite incapable of standing up to even a small amount of vibration, being frail and flimsy structures consisting of a single thickness of stone.

8 There was alarm even among the educated section of the community not, I think, at what had actually taken place, but because it seemed reasonable to expect that the same thing would happen again.

9 Some people, in fact, claim that the cause of this phenomenon lies in certain dry and fiery exhalations which are imprisoned in underground cavities and, having no proper outlet, build up an enormous pressure, until, violently shaking everything that bars their passage, they eventually force their way out into the open through some weak point in the earth's crust. Now those who advance this type of scientific explanation say that Egypt is by nature incapable of experiencing earth-tremors, being flat and low-lying and devoid of underground cavities, and that in consequence it does not become charged with such vapours, which in any case would keep seeping out of the ground even if they were present owing to the porosity and elasticity of the terrain.

10 On that occasion, then, when this theory was well and truly refuted and shown to rest on no very firm basis, the good people were naturally dismayed at the thought that the famous epigram might, to their cost, prove true in reverse and that they might, in future, be in danger of experiencing the god Poseidon not just in the capacity of "earth-supporter" but also in the more sinister role of "earth-shaker".[18] 11 Still, even though tremors

17 Probably a training in rhetoric, as Mrs. Cameron points out (op. cit. pp. 140—141).

18 This epigram has not come down to us, but it requires no great ingenuity to deduce that it made use of a mythological conceit in which these two traditional epithets of

have been felt over a part of Egypt the experts will not fail to find fresh arguments in support of the vapour theory.

12 To my mind, however, though their conclusions do not lack a certain plausibility, to the extent, that is, that it is possible for a man to make inferences about things which are beyond his ken, they are, however, very far removed from the real truth. How, indeed, could one hope to gain an accurate picture of things that he can neither see nor influence? 13 It is sufficient for us to know that all things are controlled by the workings of a divine mind. To observe and investigate the principles and operations of the physical world and the causes of each particular phenomenon, such speculation is admittedly not altogether worthless or unattractive, but it would be the most reprehensible kind of presumption to imagine that it is possible to arrive at the ultimate reality by such a procedure. But enough of such things. Let us return to the point where we broke off our account.

16. At that time the island of Cos which lies at the southern end of the Aegaean was almost completely destroyed. Indeed except for one small part of the island practically nothing was left standing, and the disaster was unprecedented in its scale and complexity. 2 The sea rose up to a fantastic height and engulfed all the buildings near the shore, destroying them together with their contents and inhabitants. The heaving mass was of such enormous proportions that it flung down everything there that its surging crests could not ride over. 3 Almost all the inhabitants perished indiscriminately, whether they happened to have taken refuge in places of worship or to have stayed in their homes or gathered together in some other spot.

4 I happened to have occasion to disembark there myself just after the disaster, when I was sailing back from Alexandria to Constantinople (the island is of course on the route). When I set foot on shore I was confronted with a spectacle that beggared description.

5 Practically the whole city was reduced to a gigantic heap of rubble, littered with stones and fragments of broken pillars and beams, and the air was murky with thick clouds of dust, so that one could barely surmise the existence of what had once been streets from a few vague hints of their presence. A mere handful of houses stood intact and they were not the ones that had been built with stones and mortar or some such seemingly more solid and durable substance, but only those made in peasant style out of unbaked bricks or mud. 6 Here and there could be seen a few men whose haggard and dejected faces wore a look of hopeless apathy.

On top of all their other ills the entire local water-supply had been contaminated with sea-water and rendered undrinkable. All was ruin and desolation. The only vestige of distinction left the city was the famous name

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the sea-god Poseidon were contrasted in order to express Egypt's immunity from earthquakes.

of the Asclepiadae [19] and its proud boast of having been the birthplace of Hippocrates.

7 To be moved to pity by tragedies such as these seems only human, but to declare oneself utterly baffled and astonished would be to betray one's ignorance of past history and of the fact that this world of ours is by its very nature continually exposed to a variety of calamities and misfortunes. Indeed many times in the past whole cities have been destroyed by earthquakes, losing all their original population and eventually being repeopled, as new cities rise on their ruins.

17. The city of Tralles on the Maeander is a case in point. This ancient settlement of the Pelasgians situated in what is now called the Province of Asia was completely devastated by an earthquake during the reign of the Emperor Augustus. [20]

2 The story goes that, when the city lay in a tragic heap of ruins, a certain rustic, a tiller of the soil by the name of Chaeremon was so deeply moved by the calamity that he could bear it no longer and so set out to accomplish an incredible and extraordinary feat. 3 Deterred neither by the distance involved, nor by the magnitude of his petition, nor by the dangers he was likely to face, nor indeed by his doubtful chances of success, nor, for that matter, by the fact that he would be leaving his family to fend for themselves, nor by any of the other considerations that lead men to change their minds, he went not just to Rome but to the land of the Cantabri [21] on the very shores of the Ocean. For Caesar was there at that time conducting a campaign against some of the local tribes.

4 When Chaeremon told him what had happened the Emperor was so touched that he straightaway designated seven of Rome's noblest and most distinguished ex-consuls and sent them with their retinues to the spot. They got there with all speed and diligently supervised the rebuilding of the city, spending huge sums of money on the project and giving the city the form which it has preserved right up to the present day. 5 It would be a misnomer to call its present inhabitants Pelasgians, rather one should think of them as Romans, even though they have become Greek-speaking, which is understandable since their territory borders on Ionia.

6 These happenings are all vouched for by the official history of the city and corroborated by an epigram which I read when I went there. 7 In one of the fields on the outskirts of the city, apparently the spot that Chaeremon came from (the name of the field is Siderus) there stands the base of a statue. It is of great antiquity and on it it appears that a statue of Chaeremon must once have stood, though there is now no longer any trace of it. 8 Never-

19 An ancient guild of physicians to which Hippocrates himself belonged.
20 27 A. D.
21 A tribe of eastern Asturia.

theless the dedication in verse inscribed on the base is still discernible and runs as follows:

"Once, when an earthquake razed his city to the ground,
the gallant Chaeremon did straightaway take thought
to rescue it and travelled till at length he found
in far-away Cantabria the Emperor and his court.
Now on this altar does his image stand
and citizens by grateful fancy led
greet as a second founder of their land
the man who rescued Tralles from the dead."

9 We may safely assume then that the foregoing is a reliable account of events in Tralles. Many other cities in Asia, in fact, both those settled by Ionians and those settled by Aeolians, suffered a similar fate at that time.

18. Well, I think I had better leave the subject of natural disasters and resume the thread of my narrative. But, if I am to give a truly comprehensive account of the period, the scene must move to the land of the Lazi and the wars with Persia.

2 The Romans and the Persians had been at war for a very long time and were continually ravaging each other's territory. Sometimes they resorted to a policy of sporadic fighting and undeclared hostility making frequent forays and incursions, on other occasions they engaged in open and full-scale warfare.

3 Shortly before our period both parties had agreed to a limited truce [22] which covered the eastern territories and the frontiers of Armenia, but did not extend to Colchis. 4 The inhabitants of Lazica were called Colchians in ancient times, so that the Lazi and the Colchians are the same people. That this is the case can easily be inferred from such landmarks as the river Phasis and the Caucasus and the fact that they have inhabited these regions for a very long time.

5 There is a tradition that the Colchians came originally as settlers from Egypt. The story goes that long before the voyage to Colchis of Jason and the Argonauts and at all events before the time of the Assyrian Empire and the days of Ninus and Semiramis, Sesostris king of Egypt raised a huge army of native Egyptians and launched an invasion against the whole of Asia, which he subdued. He is credited with having reached Colchis too and with having left a part of his host there, from which, presumably, the Colchians are descended. This account has the support of Diodorus Siculus [23] and a large number of other ancient authorities. [24]

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22 551 A. D.
23 cf. Diodorus Siculus I. 55. 4.
24 cf. Herodotus 2. 104.

6 Now these Lazi, Colchians, Egyptian migrants or what have you, have become a bone of contention in our day and age, and innumerable battles have been fought for the sake of their land.

The Persian Emperor Chosroes had already appropriated and occupied much of their territory including some of the most strategically important positions. Far from entertaining any idea of relaxing his hold on the place he was intent on completing its subjugation. On the other hand the Roman Emperor Justinian thought it unbearable and quite immoral to abandon Gubazes, the then king of the Lazi, and the whole of his nation, seeing that they were subjects of the empire and linked by a common bond of friendship and religion. Instead he did his utmost to drive out the enemy as quickly as possible.

7 Justinian grasped clearly the alarming implications of a Persian victory resulting in the annexation of the whole area. Should such a thing happen there would be nothing to prevent the Persians from sailing up the Euxine with impunity and probing deep into the heart of the Roman Empire. 8 Accordingly he stationed a large and powerful army there under the command of some of his best generals. Bessas, Martin and Buzes were in charge of the operation, all of them men of first-rate ability and wide military experience. Justin the son of Germanus, who despite his extreme youth was well-versed in the art of war, was sent there too.

19. The Persian general Mermeroes had twice attacked Archaeopolis and had been repulsed twice. After a number of other exploits which I omit to mention here since they have already been adequately recorded by Procopius, he had, at the point where I must pick up the thread of my narrative, reached Mucheirisis [25] and the stronghold of Cotaïs, determined to press on through the difficult terrain around Telephis and penetrate as far as the river Phasis. In this way he would take the Romans by surprise and, relying on the resultant confusion, would make a bid for the forcible occupation of some of the forts in the area. 2 There was no question, however, of achieving this result if he were to advance and attack openly. Martin was stationed with his army in the fortress of Telephis, and was keeping a strict watch on all approaches to the region. 3 Besides the terrain is inaccessible and almost impassable. Deep gorges and steep overhanging rocks on either side render the path below narrow in the extreme. 4 Nor is it possible to approach the place by any other route. The adjacent plains are a mass of swamps and quagmires, and dense thickets and copses rise up so as to present a formidable obstacle even for one lightly-clad man, let alone for an armed host.

Even so the Romans spared no pains and if they found any spot which

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25 Spring of 554 or 555. The chronology is uncertain.

was firm enough to walk on they immediately fenced it round with wooden stakes and stones, busying themselves incessantly with these tasks.

5 After some perplexity and a great deal of hard thinking about how to deal with the situation it occurred to Mermeroes that if by some means he could make the Romans relax their vigilance and could gradually divert their attention it would be quite feasible for him to get his forces through. But as long as the enemy kept the area under surveillance it would not be possible for him to tackle simultaneously and overcome both obstacles to his progress. Once they relaxed their vigilance, however, he thought it would not be such an impossible task to deal with the difficult terrain and clear a passage for his troops. 6 With the huge resources of manpower at his disposal he hoped to get through without much difficulty by cutting and clearing away the woods and by cutting through and removing any rocks that impeded his progress. 7 In order to secure this objective he devised the following stratagem:

Pretending that he had suddenly fallen victim to a dangerous and incurable complaint he went to bed, where he made a great display of his vexation and discomfiture and loudly lamented his fate. 8 Soon the word spread throughout the whole army that the general was seriously ill and was practically on the verge of death. Those who made money out of betraying their own people to the enemy and passing on secret information were also in the dark about what was really happening, since his plan was kept a carefully guarded secret and was not even disclosed to all his closest friends. Deceived, then, simply by the rumours which were in general circulation they informed the Romans accordingly. The Romans readily believed the report not so much, I think, on its own merits as because that was what they wanted to believe.

20. Immediately they began to relax their vigilance and no longer bothered to take strict precautions. After an interval of a few days, news arrived that Mermeroes had died. He had in fact hidden himself in a room with the result that this belief won the support of even his most intimate associates. 2 Whereupon the Romans felt that there was even less point in their passing sleepless nights and exerting themselves continually. So they suspended operations on the fences and enclosures and began to take life easy, sleeping all night and billeting themselves in the country areas. They did not even send out scouts or perform any other essential task. They thought that, being apparently leaderless, the Persians would never attack them but would go out of their way to avoid them.

3 As soon as he learnt this, Mermeroes abandoned his pretence and showed himself to the Persians just as he was before. He then promptly marched out his entire army. Throwing himself into the task with untiring

zeal he removed all obstacles to their progress by the means which he had long been planning and approached the fort.

The Romans were so startled by the unexpectedness of his approach that they were no longer in a fit state to defend themselves. 4 Martin decided therefore, to abandon the fort at this point before Mermeroes should force his way in and make havoc of the Romans there. Indeed it is hard to imagine how they, a mere handful of men, could have resisted such a vast number of enemy troops without being massacred. And so, outmanoeuvred by the barbarians, they beat an ignominious retreat and hastened to join the rest of their forces. 5 Bessas and Justin and their men were encamped on a plain only seven stades distant from Telephis. There is nothing there apart from a pottery- market, which has given its name to the spot. The place is in fact called Ollaria, a Latin word which means the same thing as Chytropolia does in Greek.[26] 6 Once Martin and the bulk of his men had already made it to safety, the generals unanimously decided to stand their ground and wait for the enemy there in order to prevent them from advancing any further.

7 Among the most distinguished of the commanders was a man named Theodore, a Tzanian by birth who had been brought up among Romans and had already lost the barbarian ways of his homeland and become quite civilized. 8 This Theodore, then, stayed on near Telephis with his own body of men (no fewer than five hundred of his fellow contrymen accompanied him) having received instructions from Martin not to leave until the enemy were near enough for him to see them all and to gauge, as far as possible, their numbers, their mettle and their intentions.

21. He proceeded to carry out these instructions with his usual energy and daring. So, when he saw that the Persians had overrun the fortress and realized that they would not stop at that but were only too eager to do battle, he immediately departed.

2 On his way back he discovered that many of the Romans had not gone straight to Chytropolia as they had been told to, but had burst into the houses of the Lazi and were carrying off millet and wheat and other foodstuffs. He tried to drive them away, reproaching them for their irresponsible behaviour and for their failure to realize what trouble they were in.

3 Those who were able to control their rapacity recognized the folly of their ways and marched to safety following his lead. 4 But Theodore had no chance to report in due course to the generals on the approach of Mermeroes. What had actually happened was that the Persians suddenly caught up with some of the soldiers who had carried on plundering regardless, and killed a few of them. The others fled and did not stop running until they had burst into the camp banging and shouting at the top of their voices. So great was the general consternation provoked by the suddenness

[26] i. e. "Pottery-Market".

of their irruption that all were seized with unwarranted panic and began to move out of their quarters.

5 The generals (their forces had not yet been properly marshalled) were infected with a similar panic, fearing that the barbarian would attack them in their present state of unpreparedness. They were ready to scrap their previous plan but they had no alternative to fall back on. Indeed the urgency of the situation and the confused state of their minds precluded even the possibility of reflection.

6 Breaking up camp immediately, therefore, they left the plain. They took all their troops with them as they retreated in an ignoble and undisciplined rout, running non-stop until they reached Nesos.[27] 7 Now Nesos is about five parasangs away from Telephis. So great a marching distance had these brave warriors covered in a single day's fast running! A parasang is, according to Herodotus[28] and Xenophon, equal to thirty stades, whereas nowdays the Iberians and Persians say that it is equivalent to twenty-one stades. 8 The Lazi too have the same units of measurement, but call them by the different and, to my mind, not inappropriate name of "pauses". The reason for this is that their porters stop for a short rest whenever they have travelled a parasang and put down their burdens, relays of fresh men taking them up in turn at each successive stage. They then divide up and measure the distance covered according to the number of times they do this. 9 But whatever way we may choose to reckon a parasang the fact remains that Nesos is one hundred and fifty stades distant from Telephis. The fort is in a strong and inaccessible position, being surrounded by two mighty rivers. 10 The Phasis and the Doconus flow separately from the Caucasus and are a very great distance apart at first, but here the lie of the land exerts its influence and causes them to converge gradually. The Romans had, by digging a canal, contrived to channel the waters of the Phasis into the Doconus, so that the two rivers unite their streams towards the eastern end of Nesos and enclose the spot. 11 After that they describe a number of twists and turns, confining a not inconsiderable section of the plain. They continue to flow until they meet of their own accord towards the west and merge completely into one another, so that all the intervening ground is virtually an island. It was in this place that the Romans had gathered.

22. When he reached Chytropolia Mermeroes decided, after pouring scorn on them for their cowardice and concentrating a considerable amount of invective on people who were not there to hear him, not to advance any further or try to attack Nesos. He had no means of conveying supplies to such a huge army in the middle of enemy territory nor was he in any other respect equipped for a siege. 2 So, since he did not like the idea of marching

[27] The word means "island".
[28] Cf. Herodotus 2. 6. 3.

back to Telephis and the difficult terrain in that region, he set up (over the river Phasis) a bridge of wooden planks and pontoons specially designed for the purpose and conveyed his whole army across without encountering any opposition. 3 Then, after he had reinforced the Persian garrison at Onoguris (which he had established in the district of Archaeopolis as a hostile base against the Romans) putting new heart into the men and making the place as secure as possible, he returned to Cotaïs and Mucheirisis. 4 Afflicted by some disease and reduced to a state of extreme ill-health he left the main body of his army in that region to guard their possessions and set off himself for Iberia.

5 After a painful journey in which he was carried to the city of Meschitha, Mermeroes succumbed to the illness and really and truly breathed his last this time. His had been one of the most distinguished careers in Persian history. A brilliant organiser and an excellent tactician, he was above all a man of intrepid spirit. When he was already an old man and had long been crippled in both his feet so badly that he was unable even to ride a horse he displayed the stamina and endurance of a young man in his prime. Nor did he fail to take part in the actual fighting, but borne on a litter he would move about the ranks of battle. Exhorting and encouraging his men and issuing timely and accurate instructions he struck terror into the hearts of the enemy and reaped the fruits of many a victory. Never indeed was there a more striking illustration of the fact that brains and not brawn are the prerequisite of a good general.

6 Mermeroes' servants took up his body, carried it out of the city and, following their ancestral custom, left it uncovered and unattended to be devoured by dogs and by such loathsome birds as feed on carrion.

23. Persian funeral customs regularly take this form. Thus the flesh is picked away leaving the bones bare to rot scattered and dismembered on the plains. It is strictly forbidden for them to put their dead into any kind of tomb or coffin or even to cover them over with earth. 2 And if the birds do not swiftly swoop down on a man's body or the dogs do not straightaway come to tear it up they think that he must have been utterly vicious and depraved and that his soul has become a sink of iniquity reserved as the exclusive haunt of the foul fiend. In that case his relations mourn still more bitterly for him since they consider him to be completely dead and to have no share in a better hereafter. 3 But if a man is devoured on the instant then they bless him for his good fortune and they regard his soul with awe and wonder, considering it to be most virtuous and godlike and destined to ascend to the place of bliss. 4 If any of the rank and file happen to be afflicted with some grievous ailment when out on active service somewhere, they are taken away while still alive and lucid. When a man is subjected to this type of exposure a piece of bread, some water and a stick are set down

beside him. As long as he is able to eat and still has some small residue of strength left him he wards off attacking animals with the stick and scares away the prospective feasters. 5 But if without actually destroying him the illness reduces him to a state where he can no longer move his arms, then the animals devour the poor wretch when he is not properly dead and is only just beginning to breath his last, thus robbing him in advance of any possible hope of recovery.

6 There have in fact been many instances of people who recovered and returned home, presenting an appearance of deathly pallor and emaciation which was enough to frighten the life out of any one who should chance to fall in with them and looking for all the world like characters on the tragic stage arriving from "the portals of darkness"[29]. 7 If anyone returns in these circumstances everybody shuns him and treats him as a pariah since he is regarded as polluted and still belonging to the netherworld. Nor is he permitted to resume his place in society until the stain of pollution incurred by the imminence of death has been purged by the Magi in order that he may, as it were, embrace life anew.

8 It is quite obvious, of course, that each of the various nations of mankind considers that any custom whatsoever which is both universally accepted in their society and deeply rooted in their past cannot fail to be perfect and sacrosanct, whereas whatever runs counter to it is deemed deplorable, contemptible and unworthy of serious consideration. Nevertheless people have always managed to find and enlist the support of reasoned arguments from all quarters when their own conventions are involved. Such arguments may indeed be true, but they may also very well be specious fabrications. 9 So it does not strike me as particularly surprising that the Persians too should try to prove, when accounting for their own customs, that these are superior to anyone else's. What I do find altogether remarkable is that the earliest inhabitants of their land, that is to say the Assyrians, Chaldaeans and Medes, had very different views on the 10 subject, as witness the tombs and sepulchres of men who died long ago which are still to be found on the outskirts of Nineveh and Babylon and also in the district of Media. The form of burial is no different from our own, and whether the bodies are enclosed or just the ashes, as is the case with those who were cremated according to the ancient Greek custom, the fact remains that it is quite unlike anything that is practised at present.

24. Those early inhabitants then held no such views concerning burial, nor was the sanctity of the marriage-bed violated in the way it now is. Not only do the present-day Persians think nothing of having intercourse with their sisters and nieces, but fathers lie with their own daughters and, horror

[29] An allusion to the Hecuba of Euripides line 1 where the words are spoken by the ghost of Polydorus.

of horrors, oh! the unnaturalness of it, sons with their mothers. That this particular abomination is a recent innovation is well illustrated by the following story. 2 It is said that the famous queen of Assyria Semiramis once sank to such depths of debauchery that she actually conceived a desire to have intercourse with her son Ninyas and even went so far as to make advances to the young man. 3 He rejected her angrily and finally when he saw that she was determined to force herself on him he slew her and chose to commit the unnatural crime of matricide rather than be guilty of incest. Yet if this type of behaviour was socially acceptable Ninyas would not, I think, have resorted to such extreme cruelty in order to avoid it.

4 There is no need, however, to confine our examples to the distant past. Shortly before the Macedonian conquest and the destruction of the Persian empire Parysatis the mother of Artaxerxes the son of Darius is said to have succumbed to the same passion as Semiramis and to have become enamoured of her son. He did not kill her however, but he angrily rejected her advances and thrust her aside, saying that it was an impious and unnatural act, quite foreign both to their nation's history and to its present way of life.

5 But the present-day Persians have almost completely abandoned their old ways; an upheaval which has been marked by the wholesale adoption of alien and degenerate manners, ever since they have come under the spell of the doctrines of Zoroaster the son of Horamasdes.

6 Now, as far as this Zoroaster or Zarades (he is called by both names) is concerned, it is not possible to fix with any precision the dates of his floruit and the period of his reforming activities. The Persians simply say that he lived in the region of Hystaspes without making it clear whether they mean the father of Darius or some other monarch of the same name. 7 Whatever the time of his floruit he was the founder and interpreter of the magian religion and he it was who changed the character of the earlier cults and introduced a motley assortment of beliefs.

8 In ancient times the Persians worshipped Zeus and Cronos and all the other divinities of the Hellenic pantheon, except that they called them by different names. They called Zeus "Bel", Heracles "Sandes", Aphrodite "Anahita" and so on and so forth, according to the testimony of Berosus of Babylon, Athenocles and Simacus who recorded the ancient history of the Assyrians and the Medes. 9 But nowadays their views conform for the most part to those of the so-called Manichaeans, to the extent of their holding that there are two first principles one of which is good and has given rise to all that is fine in reality and the other of which is the complete anithesis in both its properties and its function. They assign barbarous names drawn from their own language to these entities. The good divinity or creator they call Ahuramazda, whereas the name of the evil and malevolent one is Ahriman. 10 Of all the festivals they celebrate the most important is one called

the "festival of the slaying of the evil ones" in which they kill huge numbers of reptiles and other wild creatures and denizens of the desert and present them to the magi as a proof of their devotion. They imagine that in this way they are rendering an agreeable service to the good divinity and that they are thwarting and injuring Ahriman. 11 Their veneration of water is so great that they do not even wash their faces in it or handle it in any other way save as a drink and for the purpose of irrigation.

25. They name many other gods, whom they worship, and they perform sacrifices and practise ritual purifications and divination. Fire is considered an object of peculiar sanctity and veneration. Accordingly it is tended in certain remote and sacred chambers by the magi who never allow it to go out. Gazing into it they perform their secret rites and scrutinise the course of future events. 2 I imagine they took over this practice from the Chaldaeans or some other people, since it is something of an anomaly. Such a procedure would of course be very much in keeping with the composite nature of their religion which is a most varied blend of ideas derived from a multiplicity of different peoples. And this state of affairs too is what I should have expected. 3 Indeed I know of no other society which has been subjected to such a bewildering variety of transformations or which through its submission to an endless succession of foreign dominations has failed so signally to achieve any degree of continuity. Small wonder then that it still bears the stamp of many different forms and conventions.

4 The Assyrians are the first people mentioned in our tradition as having conquered the whole of Asia as far as the river Ganges. Ninus appears to have been the founder of the dynasty and was followed by Semiramis and the whole line of their descendants stretching as far as Beleus the son of Dercetades. 5 When with Beleus, the last scion of the house of Semiramis, the family became extinct a man called Beletaran, who was head gardener in the palace, gained possession of the throne in extraordinary circumstances and grafted the royal title on to his own family. The story is told by Bion and by Alexander Polyhistor and takes us down to the reign of Sardanapalus when, as they tell us, the kingdom entered upon a phase of decline and Arbaces the Mede and Belesys the Babylonian wrested it from the Assyrians, killing their king and bringing it under the control of the Medes, some one thousand three hundred and six years or more after Ninus' rise to power. This figure is based on the chronology of Ctesias the Cnidian and accords with that given by Diodorus Siculus.

6 A period of Median domination then ensued in which everything was ordered according to that people's laws and customs. After not less than three hundred years of Median rule, however, Cyrus the son of Cambyses defeated Astyages in battle and brought the country under Persian control. One could hardly expect him to have done otherwise seeing that he was

himself a native Persian and resented the fact that the Medes had fought on the side of Astyages.

7 The Persian kings ruled for two hundred and twenty-eight years but their empire disintegrated completely when it was overrun by the forces of a foreign king. 8 Alexander, the son of Philip slew their king Darius the son of Arsames, annexed the whole of Persia and re-organized the state along Macedonian lines. So outstanding in fact were the achievements of that invincible warrior that, even after death had removed him from the scene, his successors, Macedonians though they were, held sway over an alien land for a great length of time and came to wield very considerable power. Indeed I think that on the strength of their predecessor's reputation they would have remained in power right up to the present day if internal dissensions and frequent wars of conquest directed against one another and against the Romans had not sapped their strength and destroyed the myth of their apparent invincibility.

9 The Macedonian supremacy lasted a mere seven years less than that of the Medes, if we are to accept the testimony of Polyhistor on this matter too. Despite their long period of ascendancy, however, the Macedonians were finally ousted by the Parthians. 10 These members of a hitherto insignificant dependency then became rulers of the whole empire with the exception of Egypt. Arsaces, the leader of the revolt, gave his name to the dynasty of the Arsacids that succeeded him, and it was not long before Mithridates raised the name of the Parthians to great heights of renown.

26. The passage of two hundred and seventy years from Arsaces the first king to Artabanus [30] the last one marks the inception, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Alexander the son of Mamaea, of the dynasty to which the contemporary Chosroes belongs. It was at this time also that the present-day Persian state took shape.

2 A certain Persian called Ardashir, a man of humble and obscure origins but of great daring and resourcefulness and a born revolutionary, launched an attack with a band of conspirators and killed the king Artabanus. Assuming the diadem of the kings of Persia he put an end to the hegemony of Parthia and restored the empire of the Persians.

3 He was a devotee of the magian religion and an official celebrant of its mysteries. Consequently the priestly caste of the magi rose to inordinate power and arrogance. This body had indeed made its influence felt on previous occasions in the course of its long history, though it had never before been elevated to such a position of privilege and immunity, but had hitherto been officially accorded what in certain respects amounted to an inferior status.

[30] i. e. Artabanus V.

4 Otherwise (to take an example from the distant past) Darius and his supporters would not have been appalled, as they were, at the usurpation of Smerdes after the death of Cambyses the son of Cyrus. Nor would they have killed Smerdes and large numbers of his political and religious sympathizers on the grounds that the magi were not eligible to aspire to the dignity of the imperial throne. Far from considering the killings an outrage they felt that their memory should be perpetuated, with the result that a feast was instituted which was named "the Magophonia"[31] after the coup d'état[32] and was accompanied by sacrifices of thanksgiving.

5 Nowadays, however, the magi are the objects of extreme awe and veneration, all public business being conducted at their discretion and in accordance with their prognostications, and no litigant or party to a private dispute fails to come under their jurisdiction. Indeed nothing receives the stamp of legality in the eyes of the Persians unless it is ratified by one of the magi.

27. The mother of Ardashir is believed to have been married to a certain Papak, a cobbler by profession and a person of no social consequence. He was, however, extremely well-versed in astrology and could divine the future with ease. 2 Now it so happened that a soldier called Sasan was travelling through the region of Cadusia and was hospitably entertained by Papak, who showed him to his humble abode.

3 Somehow or other, presumably through his own prophetic powers, Papak discovered that his guest's offspring was destined to greatness and to singular good fortune. Reflecting that he had neither daughter nor sister nor any close female relative he was troubled and perplexed. Finally he made his wife go to bed with his guest and turning a blind eye to the outrage took future good fortune as the compensation for present humiliation and disgrace.

4 These then were the circumstances of Ardashir's birth. He was brought up by Papak, but no sooner had he grown up and seized the throne than a violent quarrel openly broke out between Sasan and Papak, each one claiming that the boy should bear his name. 5 They eventually agreed, however, that he should be referred to as the son of Papak born of the seed of Sasan. This at any rate is the account of the genealogy of Ardashir which the Persians maintain to be true, basing this assertion on the claim that it accords with the version given in the royal archives.

6 I shall presently give a list in chronological order of the names of all the descendants of Ardashir who came to the throne with details of the duration of each particular reign. Historians have so far failed to compile such a list; indeed the whole subject has received scant attention. 7 And yet they

[31] i. e. "Slaughter-of-the-magi".

produce lists of the kings and emperors of Rome which go back as far perhaps as Romulus, or to the still more distant days of Aeneas the son of Anchises, and extend to the reigns of Anastasius and Justin. For the kings of Persia, however, that is to say for those that have reigned since the break up of the Parthian Empire) they have not yet drawn up a parallel list setting out the chronology of their reigns, though such a list is still a desideratum.

8 I have therefore made it my business to collect accurate information on the subject from official Persian sources and I feel that a detailed exposé of my findings is especially called for in a work such as the present. Consequently I shall proceed to give full particulars whenever I think it necessary, even though this will entail the enumeration of long and arid lists of names and barbarian names at that, and even though they will sometimes be the names of personages who have achieved nothing worth recording. 9 At this point I should like to add, for the convenience of the reader, the following clarification: three hundred and nineteen years takes us down to the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Chosroes during which period the fighting in Lazica was in full swing and the death of Mermeroes had occurred. The emperor Justinian had been on the throne for twenty-eight years.

28. After first saying a few words about Chosroes I shall return directly to my earlier narrative.

Chosroes has been praised and admired quite beyond his deserts not just by the Persians but even by some Romans. He is in fact credited with being a lover of literature and a profound student of philosophy and somebody is supposed to have translated the works of Greek literature into Persian for him. 2 It is rumoured moreover that he has absorbed the whole of the Stagirite more thoroughly than the Paeanian orator[33] absorbed the works of the son of Olorus,[34] that his mind is filled with the doctrines of Plato the son of Ariston and that not even the Timaeus, bristling as it does with geometrical theorems and scientific speculations, would elude his grasp, nor for that matter the Phaedo or the Gorgias or any other of the polished and more intricate dialogues, as for instance the Parmenides.

3 Personally, I could never bring myself to believe that he was so remarkably well-educated and intellectually brilliant. How could the purity and nobility of those time-honoured writings with all their exactitude and felicity of expression be preserved in an uncouth and uncivilized tongue? 4 Moreover one may well ask how a man brought up from childhood in the glamorous atmosphere of the court, surrounded by pomp and adulation, and

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32 viz. that which brought Darius to power.

33 The orator Demosthenes who belonged to the deme Paeania in Attica.

34 The historian Thucydides. In plain English, then, the assertion that Agathias is so indignantly rebutting is "that Chosroes was more at home with the complete works of Aristotle than Demosthenes was with the writings of Thucydides.

then succeeding to an utterly barbarous style of life of which battles and manoeuvres were a regular feature, could hope to achieve any real competence or proficiency in this branch of learning.

5 Yet if people were to praise him on the score that, in spite of being a Persian and in spite of being weighed down with the cares of empire and the responsibility of governing so many nations, he still showed some interest in acquiring a smattering of literature and liked to be considered something of a dilettante, in that case I should add my own voice to the general chorus and should not hesitate to regard him as superior to the rest of the barbarians. 6 But those who attribute exceptional wisdom to him and call him the rival of all philososphers that have ever lived, claiming that, in the manner of the Peripatetic definition of superior culture, he has mastered every branch of science, thereby disclose the unreality of their pretensions and make it plain to all that they are merely echoing the ill-considered opinions of the crowd.

29. There was in fact a certain Syrian called Uranius who used to roam about Constantinople. He was a medical practitioner by profession and though he had no accurate appreciation of any of Aristotle's doctrines he used to brag about his encyclopaedic knowledge, basing his enormous self-conceit on the fact that he was argumentative when in company.

2 He was often to be found in front of the Basileios Stoa and would take his seat at the bookstalls and engage in magniloquent debates with those who congregated there, people who would keep trotting out the same old catchwords about the Deity — how to define its nature and essence, passibility, distinctness and such like things[35] 3 Most of them, I dare say, were people who had not received an elementary education and who had not even led a decent life, so that it was indeed a case of "fools rushing in where angels fear to tread", since they thought it the easiest thing in the world to try their hands at theology, a subject altogether sublime and unattainable, which surpasses human understanding and excites awe and wonder by its sheer incomprehensibility.

4 So they would often congregate towards evening, in all probability after some drunken orgy, and blithely embark upon an impromptu discussion of the most exalted and intangible topics. Such discussions invariably degenerated into the sort of inconclusive hair-splitting which results neither in persuasion nor in enlightenment. 5 Each man would cling tenaciously to his own views till in the end tempers rose at the thought of each other's intransigence and they would resort to open abuse, using foul language like people brawling over a game of dice. Eventually the debate would be adjourned, the contestants being parted with difficulty and the whole fruitless exercise serving merely to make enemies out of friends.

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[35] For a detailed interpretation and discussion of this difficult passage cf. R. Keydell: B. Z. 64 (1971) pp. 70—71.

6 Now the star performer in this group was Uranius. Like Homer's Thersites[36] he was full of noisy abuse and endless chatter. Yet he held no firm opinions about God and had no idea how to conduct a reasoned argument on this subject. One moment he would attack the first proposition on which a particular line of enquiry was based, another time he would insist on being given the reason for a question before he would answer it. In this way he would not allow the discussion to develop in an orderly fashion but confused the issue and prevented anything positive from emerging. 7 He affected the manner of what is known as sceptical empiricism and modelled his pronouncements on the style of Pyrrho and Sextus, aiming to escape mental anxiety by denying the possibility of mental activity. But he had not even mastered these notions having barely picked up the few isolated scraps of information necessary to enable him to deceive and mislead the ignorant.

8 But if his cultural standards left much to be desired his behaviour left still more. Frequenting the houses of the wealthy he would gorge himself on the choicest dainties and consort repeatedly with the wine-jug, drinking himself silly and uttering a stream of obscenities. He made such a laughing-stock of himself that at times he was even smacked on the jaw, and it was not unknown for his face to drip with the lees from other people's glasses that had been poured over him. He was in fact the butt of the dinner-table no less so than if he had been a buffoon or hired entertainer.

9 Though he was the sort of person I have described Uranius once managed to get Areobindus the ambassador to take him to Persia. Being an impostor with chameleon like powers of adaption he had little difficulty in assuming an air of decorum. Donning an impressive robe of the type worn in our part of the world by professors and doctors of literature and with a correspondingly grave and sober look on his face he presented himself to Chosroes. 10 Overwhelmed by the novelty of the sight, Chosroes was greatly impressed and assumed that he really was a philosopher (which was in fact what he was announced as). 11 After giving him a most cordial reception he summoned the magi to join with him in discussing such questions as the origin of the physical world, whether the universe will last forever and whether one should posit a single first principle for all things.

30. Uranius had not one relevant idea to contribute to the discussion, but what he lacked in this respect he made up for in glibness and self-confidence and, as Socrates says in the Gorgias, it was "the victory of ignorance among the ignorant".[37] 2 In fact the crazy buffoon so captured the king's imagination that he gave him a huge sum of money, made him dine at his own table and accorded him the unprecedented honour of passing the loving

[36] A reminiscence of Iliad book II lines 212 foll.

[37] cf. Plato: Gorgias 459 b. "then, the man without knowledge will carry more conviction in the company of the ignorant".

cup to him. 3 He swore on many occasions that he had never before seen his equal, in spite of the fact that he had previously beheld real philosophers of great distinction who had come to his court from these parts.

Not long before Damascius of Syria, Simplicius of Cilicia, Eulamius of Phrygia, Priscian of Lydia, Hermes and Diogenes of Phoenicia and Isidore of Gaza, all of them, to use a poetic turn of phrase, the quintessential flower [38] of the philosophers of our age, had come to the conclusion, since the official religion of the Roman empire was not to their liking, that the Persian state was much superior. So they gave a ready hearing to the stories in general circulation according to which Persia was the land of "Plato's philosopher king" [39] in which justice reigned supreme. Apparently the subjects too were models of decency and good behaviour and there was no such thing as theft, brigandage or any other sort of crime. Even if some valuable object were left in no matter how remote a spot nobody who came across it would make off with it, but it would stay put and, without any one's guarding it, would be virtually kept safe for whoever left it until such a time as he should return.

4 Elated therefore by these reports which they accepted as true, and also because they were forbidden by law to take part in public life with impunity owing to the fact that they did not conform to the established religion, [40] they left immediately and set off for a strange land whose ways were completely foreign to their own, determined to make their homes there. 5 But in the first place they discovered that those in authority were overbearing and vainglorious and so had nothing but disgust and opprobrium for them. In the second place they realized that there were large numbers of housebreakers and robbers, some of whom were apprehended while others escaped detection, and that every form of crime was committed. 6 The powerful in fact ill-treated the weak outrageously and displayed considerable cruelty and inhumanity in their dealings with one another. But the most extraordinary thing of all was that even though a man could and did have any number of wives people still had the effrontery to commit adultery. 7 The philosophers were disgusted by all these things and blamed themselves for ever having made the move.

31. The opportunity of conversing with the king proved a further disappointment. It was that monarch's proud boast that he was a student of philosophy but his knowledge of the subject was utterly superficial. There was no common ground either in matters of religion since he observed the practices I have already described. Finally the vicious promiscuity which characterized Persian society was more than the philosophers could stand.

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38 Perhaps Agathias has in mind Pindar: Isthmians VII 18.

39 cf. Plato's Republic 473 d.

40 Justinian's edict of 529 forbade pagans from teaching and resulted in the closure of the Academy in Athens.

All these factors, then, combined to send them hurrying back home as fast as they could go. 2 So despite the king's affection for them and despite the fact that he invited them to stay they felt that merely to set foot on Roman territory, even if it meant instant death, was preferable to a life of distinction in Persia. Accordingly they resolved to see the last of barbarian hospitality and all returned home.

3 Nevertheless they derived from their stay abroad a benefit which was neither slight nor negligible, but which was to secure them peace of mind and contentment for the rest of their days. 4 A clause was inserted in fact in the treaty, which at that time was being concluded between the Romans and the Persians, to the effect that the philosophers should be allowed to return to their homes and to live out their lives in peace without being compelled to alter their traditional religious beliefs or to accept any view which did not coincide with them. Chosroes insisted on the inclusion of this point and made the ratification and continued observance of the truce conditional on its implementation.

5 The story goes that on their return journey they had an extraordinarily impressive and memorable experience. 6 Stopping to rest in a field in Persia they descried the body of a man not long dead, flung down unceremoniously without any attempt at burial. Moved to compassion by the sight of such outrageous barbarity and thinking it sinful to remain the passive spectators of an unnatural crime they made their servants lay out the body as best they could, cover it with earth and bury it. 7 That night when they were all asleep one of their number (I cannot be more specific because I do not know his name) dreamed that he saw an old man who, though his face was unfamiliar and his identity could not even be surmised, had an air of dignity and decorum about him and resembled a philosopher in the style of his dress and in the fact that he had a long, flowing beard. Apparently by way of exhortation and advice, he recited the following verses to him in a loud voice:

"Bury not the man whom now you see,
the man whom buried not you found.
Mother earth will not receive
the mother-ravisher till he be
by dogs devoured on the ground".

8 Waking up in sudden terror he related his dream to the others. There and then they were at a loss what to make of it, but towards morning, when they got up and set off on their way, they were obliged by the lie of the land to pass by the spot where the improvised burial had been arranged and once more found the dead man lying uncovered on the ground. It was as though the earth had of its own accord cast him up into the open and refused to protect him from being devoured. 9 Astonished at the extraordinary sight

they continued their journey without thereafter observing any of their customary rites towards the dead man. A careful consideration of the dream had in fact led them to the same conclusion — namely that the Persians reserved the fate of remaining unburied and being torn to pieces by dogs as the just punishment of those who vent their foul lusts upon their mothers.

32. But in spite of the fact that Chosroes had had personal experience of these men he had greater regard and affection for Uranius. The reason for such an attitude is, in my view, something inherent in human nature. Whatever is more or less on a par with ourselves we tend naturally to have a high and affectionate regard for, whereas we shun and eschew that which is beyond us.

2 When Uranius returned home Chosroes sent him the most delightful letters in which he showed him all the respect of a disciple for his master. After that he became insupportable, bragging about his friendship with the king and, whenever he was in company or at a party, he would drive all and sundry to the point of exasperation by perpetually harping on the subject of the honours Chosroes had showered upon him and the discussions the two of them had held. 3 Indeed the fellow returned home a bigger fool by far than he had been before, as though he had travelled such an immense distance with that sole end in view. Yet, even though the man was both a knave and a fool he managed, by dint of singing the praises of the barbarian king, to convince the general public with his portrayal of him as a man of learning. 4 Those in fact who combined extreme gullibility with a weakness for strange and marvellous tales were easily hoodwinked by his boastful and bombastic assertions, since they never stopped to ask themselves who was doing the praising, who was being praised and what he was being praised for. 5 One would indeed be fully justified in admiring Chosroes for his brilliant generalship and for his indomitable spirit which never broke under the strain of battle, never yielded to fear and never succumbed to sickness and old age. But when it comes to literature and philosophy he must rank no higher than one may reasonably place an associate and disciple of the notorious Uranius.

BOOK 3

1. Even if my account of the customs of the Persians and the various changes their way of life has undergone, together with what I felt needed to be said about Chosroes and his genealogy, have taken up rather a lot of space without having any very strict connection with the preceding matter, yet I trust that the whole exercise will appear neither superfluous nor unprofitable but rather that it will be seen to have secured the twin objects of amusement and edification. 2 It is indeed my most ardent desire, if it is in my power to do so, "to mingle the Graces with the Muses",[1] as the saying goes. 3 But mundane preoccupations impel me in a different direction and I address myself, albeit with reluctance, to the routine duties imposed by necessity. For the writing of my histories, vast and imposing task though it is, and, to quote the lyric poet of Boeotia,[2] "above all occupation"[3], is reduced to an occasional pursuit and I am in consequence unable to devote myself whole-heartedly to this labour of love. 4 And though I should be at leisure to improve my style by reading through the works of the great writers of antiquity, to survey with critical discernment the entire historical scene and to give my full and unfettered attention to these matters, I am instead kept at my desk in the Basileios Stoa[4] from early morning to late evening busying myself with the incessant perusal of innumerable legal documents. And though I resent being overworked I am distressed if I am not, since it is impossible for me to eke out a livelihood without considerable toil and hardship. 5 But even so I shall not slacken in my resolve, as long as the creative urge persists, even though some readers may criticise me for overreaching myself and aspiring, as they say, to run before I can walk. 6 Even if some should find my writings thoroughly shoddy and superficial and indeed the typical products of an undisciplined mind, yet I may still succeed in pleasing myself, just as people with no ear for music enjoy their own singing. 7 But lest by indulging in further digressions I give the impression of lapsing into tastelessness I had better resume my previous account of the fighting in Lazica.

1 A reminiscence of Euripides: Heracles lines 673—4.

2 Pindar (518—438 B.C.).

3 Pindar: Isthmian I. 2.

4 The Basileios Stoa or Royal Stoa was, as Procopius tells us (Buildings: I, XI, 12) the place in Constantinople "where the lawyers and prosecutors and all others concerned with such matters prepare their cases". We are also told (op. cit. I. XI, 13) that Justinian had a cistern dug under part of the Building. The identification of this cistern with a surviving one, now called Yeri Batan Serai, allows us to locate the Royal Stoa at a short distance to the west of the Church of St. Sophia.

2. Chosroes was of course greatly distressed at the news of the death of Mermeroes. To prevent the troops in Lazica from remaining leaderless, however, he immediately appointed as general Nachoragan, a man of considerable distinction and renown. 2 In the time it took Nachoragan to make the necessary preparations for the journey and actually get started on his way some highly irregular proceedings took place in Lazica.

3 When the Romans fled ingloriously and abandoned their positions in the manner I have already described, Gubazes the king of the Lazi was filled with a fury at the thought of the disgrace incurred which was exceeded only by his apprehension at the prospect of further blunders. He therefore lost no time in sending a detailed report to Justinian in which he held the generals responsible, laying the blame for everything that had happened on their incompetence and singling out Bessas as the chief culprit. He also named Martin and Rusticus. 4 Now Rusticus was a Galatian and was not there as a general, or a commander or in any military capacity but merely as the Emperor's pursebearer. He was not in charge of the revenue resulting from the payment of tribute (that was the province of a different official) but of the payments the Emperor made out of his privy purse as reward money for those soldiers who distinguished themselves at the front. 5 Consequently his influence was immense and the fact that he had access to confidential reports meant that official instructions seemed to carry more weight when they met with his approval.

6 Bessas, however, was already in Justinian's black books, because of his conduct on an earlier occasion. Having captured the fortress of Petra before the arrival of Mermeroes he should, in fact, have secured all the approaches into the country from Iberia, (a task facilitated by the nature of the terrain), and thus made it impossible for the barbarians to enter Lazica. But he wilfully neglected to do so and instead went the rounds of the cities subject to his control levying money from them. 7 So that when the Emperor came to hear of these further misdemeanours he remembered the earlier ones and was immediately convinced by the report. Accordingly he relieved him of his command, confiscated his property and relegated him to the country of the Abasgi, where he was to remain until the Emperor's further pleasure.

8 In spite of being extremely annoyed with Martin, Justinian assigned the chief command to him. Consequently Martin was first in command among the generals and Justin second, followed by Buzes and the rest in descending order.

9 Even in the past, relations between Martin and Rusticus on the one hand and Gubazes on the other had always been strained and there was an undercurrent of hostility which was all the more dangerous and deadly for never being openly voiced. This animosity, which had its origin in envy,

was greatly exacerbated by the constant operation of irrational suspicion. 10 Viewing his every action in the light of their resentment they nursed their grievances and resentment hardened into anger. 11 Gubazes sensing their intense hostility was moved to reciprocate and spoke abusively of them on several occasions, depicting them as cowardly braggarts with no sense of duty. At official receptions and meetings he never ceased to vent his anger on them unreservedly even when in the presence of ambassadors from the neighbouring peoples.

Finding this situation intolerable, angered at the accusations he had made to the Emperor and well aware that if they should make any further mistakes he would not fail to expose them, they resolved to get rid of him in order to punish him for past injuries and safeguard themselves for the future.

3. After much deliberation in common they sent John the brother of Rusticus to Constantinople to report that Gubazes had been caught collaborating with the Persians, since they had come to the conclusion that it was not politic to make away with him until they had first sounded out the Emperor's feelings on the matter.

2 In a secret interview with the Emperor John accused Gubazes of having already defected and of trying to bring in the Persians. Unless he were stopped somehow and stopped quickly it would not be long before he made the country into a Persian dependency. 3 The Emperor was shocked by such a startling revelation but he was not completely convinced. So still in two minds about the whole business he said, "arrange to have him summoned to our presence then". 4 John, fearful that if he did arrive there the plot would be uncovered, said, "so be it, master. But what shall we do if he does not choose to come voluntarily?" "You must compel him", answered the Emperor, "since he is a subject, and somehow contrive to send him". 5 Whereupon John immediately retorted, "But if he resists compulsion, what then?" "Then", said the Emperor, "he will most assuredly suffer the fate of a rebel and perish miserably". 6 "In that case, master", said John, "whoever kills him will have nothing to fear". "Nothing", answered the Emperor, "that is, if he disobeys and offers resistance and is then killed as an enemy".

7 Once the Emperor had given this reply and had expressed much the same view in a letter to the generals John felt that he had achieved his goal. So he did not stop to ask any more questions but returned to Lazica with the letter. Martin and Rusticus read it, found that the plot had been nicely contrived and immediately set about putting it into effect.

8 Summoning Justin and Buzes and concealing their design they said that they must go to Gubazes as quickly as possible in order to discuss with him their plans for a concerted attack on the Persians at Onoguris. Believing this, Justin and Buzes set off with them, accompanied by a small detachment of

troops. 9 Meanwhile Gubazes received word that the generals were on their way to meet him and would be arriving any moment. Little suspecting any hostile intent he appeared near the banks of the river Chobus. Confident and relaxed the unfortunate man met them there with only a tiny retinue of unarmed attendants. 10 Indeed it would have been strange had he acted otherwise. The men he approached were not enemies, they were both friendly and well-know to him. Had they not been sent to defend his land and repel the foreign invader?

4. Sitting on their horses, then, they conducted a joint discussion on the question of how to deal with the present situation. "Gubazes", said Rusticus, "what would you say to the suggestion that you offer us some assistance in the task of attacking the Persian garrison at Onoguris? It will be a disgrace if they remain encamped in the middle of our territory, particularly since they are a mere handful of men and are in no position to fight us".

2 "But, my dear fellows", replied Gubazes, "it is up to you and to you alone to bear the brunt of the present fighting, since you are solely to blame for what has happened. 3 If you had not been guilty of gross carelessness and neglect of duty, no hostile base would ever have been built to confront you, neither would you have turned tail and borne the stigma of dishonourable flight, nor would any of the other undesirable consequences have ensued. 4 So, my fine fellows, you must now make good your omissions if you profess to be enamoured of glory and if you delight in the exalted name of general. For you may rest assured that I will not throw in my lot with you until all your errors have been rectified". 5 No sooner had these words been spoken than that same John who had played the part of talebearer, acting as though the expression of a different opinion were sufficient proof of Persians sympathies and of planned subversion, silently drew his dagger and struck Gubazes in the chest. The blow did not kill him outright. 6 Since he happened to be sitting with his feet crossed over his horse's neck he fell suddenly, knocked off his balance not so much by the force of the blow as by its unexpectedness. While he was still crawling about on the ground and trying to get up one of Rusticus' bodyguard who was nearby and who was acting on instructions struck him a blow on the head with his sword and finished him off. The best-informed and the most reliable sources state that Gubazes was murdered in these circumstances and for the motives given.

7 Justin and Buzes were deeply distressed and regarded what had been done as an unmitigated disaster. They kept quiet however, because they thought that the Emperor Justinian had expressly authorized it. 8 The Lazian people were thrown into confusion and despondency and refused to have anything more to do with the Romans in either a civil or a military capacity. Instead they buried the dead man according to their own rites, after which they refrained from all participation in the fighting, in protest at

the outrageous treatment they had received and the resultant blow to their nation's prestige.

5. The Lazi are a great and a proud people and they rule over other very considerable peoples. They pride themselves on their connection with the ancient name of the Colchians and have an exaggeratedly, though perhaps understandably, high opinion of themselves. 2 I certainly know of no other subject race with such ample resources of manpower at its command or which is blessed with such a superfluity of wealth, with such an ideal geographical position, with such an abundance of all the necessaries of life and with such a high standard of civilisation and refinement. 3 The ancient inhabitants of the place were indeed completely unaware of the benefits of navigation and had not even heard of ships until the arrival of the famous Argo. Nowadays they put out to sea whenever practicable and carry on a thriving commerce. 4 Nor are they barbarians in any other respect, long association with the Romans having led them to adopt a civilized and law-abiding style of life. So that, discounting the bulls with brazen feet, the harvest of the Sown Men and all the other fabulous and incredible creations of the poetic imagination that have been elaborated around the figure of Aeetes,[5] one cannot fail to find that conditions now are very much better than they were in the past. 5 Being the sort of people I have described, then, the Lazi had every reason for feeling that they had suffered an intolerable injury in being arbitrarily deprived of their king.

6 The Romans, at the instance of Martin, started immediately to make hasty preparations with a view to mounting a full-scale attack against the Persians at Onoguris. Onoguris was the ancient name of the place and may have arisen as the result of an encounter at some time in the past between a branch of the Huns called the Onoguri and the Colchians in which the latter were victorious, the local inhabitants then commemorating the success by naming the spot after it. 7 Nowadays, however, most people do not use this name. A place of worship stands on the spot and is dedicated to Stephen, the man of God who they say was the first in olden times to voluntarily forfeit his life in defence of Christian principles and was in fact stoned to death by his enemies. Consequently it has become customary to associate his name with the place. Nevertheless I can see no possible objection to my designating it by its ancient name and, in any case, such a practice is more in keeping with the style of historical writing.

8 Meanwhile the Roman army was preparing to march against Onoguris. Those who had plotted the murder were pressing on with these preparations in the hope that they would easily overwhelm the garrison, so that even if the Emperor got wind of their duplicity he would not be particularly angry

[5] The reference is, of course, to the well-known myth of the Argonauts.

with them but would rescind the accusation in consideration of their latest success.

9 So all the generals and their men, who had been encamped on the plain of Archaeopolis, began to get ready the "wicker roofs" as they are called and the ballistae and other such engines of war with the idea of taking the place by storm if necessary. 10 The "wicker roof" is a construction of osiers woven together so as to form a roof which is carried down on either side so as to enclose whoever gets under it. Skins and hides are then placed in layers over it and the device is completely overlaid with them in order to afford greater protection and to be proof against missiles. 11 Inside, men conceal themselves under it in safety lifting it without being seen and moving it to wherever they wish. When it is brought up to a tower or wall as the case may be, then the men underneath dig up the adjacent ground and drawing up the earth lay bare the foundations. After that they keep striking it with hammers and crow-bars until they cause the structure to collapse. These then were the sort of preparations the Romans were making for the siege.

6. Meanwhile a Persian who was on his way to the fort was captured by Justin's bodyguard. He was taken to the camp and flogged until he gave a true account of what his side were planning. 2 He declared that Nachoragan had already reached Iberia and had sent him to encourage the troops at Onoguris and assure them that the general would very soon be there. 3 "The men stationed at Mucheirisis and Cotaïs will be arriving shortly", he said, "to reinforce their fellow countrymen at Onoguris, since they know that you mean to attack them".

4 As soon as this information had been extracted the Roman generals held a discussion on the situation. Buzes said that they should make a concerted attack on the relief force while it was still on its way. It was reasonable to expect that it would be outnumbered and defeated, the logical outcome of which would be that the garrison, finding itself isolated, would surrender. In the case of their actually offering any resistance it would require little effort to crush them. 5 This suggestion met with the approval of Wilgang the leader of the Herul contingent. Consequently he kept repeating a sort of proverb which despite its uncouthness and homespun simplicity was both forceful and appropriate. He said that "you must first scare away the bees and then take your time over collecting the honey."

6 Rusticus however, (emboldened apparently by his complicity with Martin he had already become more insolent and overbearing) openly scoffed and jeered at Buzes, accusing him of habitual ineptitude. 7 The best policy, he said, was not to wear the troops out unnecessarily but to bring up all their men to the fort, reduce it without difficulty and forestall the relief-force. They could always send a few men to engage them and impede their progress.

8 Buzes' plan was of course a much better one. It was realistic, strategically sound, effective and safe. But since, it seems, the whole army shared by association in the guilt of the murderers the worse policy won the day in order that they might the more speedily be punished.

9 Some six hundred horse at the most were sent against the relief-force from Mucheirisis. They were under the command of Dabragezas and Usigardus, two barbarians who were officers in the Roman army. 10 The rest of the men together with the generals went into action and made an assault on the gates. Then they surrounded the walls with the main body of their forces and let fly with their weapons from all sides. 11 The Persians for their part defended themselves by every available means, dashing about on the battlements, raining down missiles and securing themselves against the oncoming ones by suspending canvas mantlets to soften and absorb the blows. 12 The fight was sustained with great fury by both sides and looked more like a pitched battle than a siege. Both sides were worked up to a feverish state of excitement and were showing their mettle with equal determination though for different reasons. In one case it was a struggle for survival in the face of a serious menace, in the other it was the humiliating prospect, once the attack had been launched, of returning without achieving the objective of reducing the fort and ridding Archaeopolis of an enemy presence in its own neighbourhood.

7. Meanwhile the Persian relief force consisting of about three thousand horse had left Cotaïs and Mucheirisis and set out for Onoguris. 2 On their way they were suddenly attacked by Dabragezas and Usigardus and their men. They were not expecting to encounter any opposition and were caught off their guard, with the result that they panicked and fled. 3 As soon as the besieging Romans heard the news they charged more furiously pulled down the mantlets and swarmed up many parts of the wall, confident that they would sweep everything before them, now that the enemy from without had taken to flight and there was no longer anyone to cause them concern. 4 But the Persians soon realized that it was not the whole Roman army that had attacked them as they thought at first, but an insignificant reconnaissance force too few in number even to be considered a detachment of fighting men. So they faced about and charged them with a deafening shout. 5 The Romans were unable to cope with the new situation and hastily exchanged the rôle of pursuer for that of fugitive. The Persians followed hard on their heels, with the result that, as the pursuers rushed to catch up with their victims and the victims to evade their pursuers, both parties reached the Roman lines indiscriminately confused.

6 Not surprisingly the confusion which ensued was appalling. Without giving another thought to the siege and the by-now-imminent prospect of sacking the fort and without even stopping to find out what was happening

or to ascertain their own strength and that of their pursuers the entire army together with their leaders were seized with panic and fled in terror.

7 Growing bolder, the Persians pressed their pursuit still harder. Meanwhile those who were inside the fort saw what was happening and rushing out to join in the pursuit made the plight of the fleeing enemy redound still further to their credit. 8 The Roman cavalry raced away at a gallop and easily got out of range of the enemy's weapons. But many of the infantry were killed in the stampede which occurred when they had to cross the bridge over the river called the Catharus.[6] 9 Unable at that point to cross over simultaneously in large numbers because of the narrowness of the bridge, they kept shoving and jostling one another. Some fell into the river whilst others were forced back into the hands of the enemy. 10 The scene was one of unrelieved horror and would have ended in total annihilation had not Buzes realized from their cries of anguish and alarm just how serious the danger was. Turning around with his troops, he faced the enemy and gradually held back the pursuit just long enough to allow them to cross the bridge and get away to safety by the same route as all the others had taken. 11 No one in fact returned to the camp at Archaeopolis. Rushing past it in terror they left their entire stock of foodstuffs and provisions and valuables and escaped to the safety of the interior. They thus afforded the enemy a lucrative as well as a magnificent victory.

8. When the Persians found the plains deserted they dismantled the fortifications and looted the camp. After that they returned rejoicing to their respective camps and occupied once more all the territory they had previously held.

2 Yet who can fail to see that the hand of heaven was at work bringing about the downfall of the Roman army as a punishment for the foul murder which had been committed? That was the reason why they chose the worst possible policy and why, though they numbered some fifty thousand fighting men, they were put to flight most shamefully by three thousand Persians and suffered severe casualties. 3 But those directly responsible for that heinous crime were soon to be punished in full, as I shall relate in the ensuing narrative. Meantime winter set in and the whole army dispered to its various winter-quarters in the towns and fortresses.

4 The affairs of the Colchians were in a state of turmoil and suspense. Their leaders had lost all sense of direction. They had no policy or contingency plan to fall back on. 5 They therefore convened a secret meeting of the bulk of their nation down in a mountain gorge of the Caucasus, so that the Romans should not get wind of what they were about, and proposed a discussion on the subject of whether they should go over to the Persian side

[6] The word means "clear".

or retain their link with the Romans. 6 A vociferous debate immediately ensued between those who advocated the former and those who advocated the latter course. Before long it had degenerated into a babel of voices in which it was impossible to tell either who was speaking or what he was saying. At this point those with the most authority called for silence and insisted that whoever wished to come forward and speak should do so in an orderly fashion and that whoever was able to should give a coherent account of the policy to be pursued.

7 One of the most distinguished people present was a man called Aeetes. His anger and indignation at what had happened was greater than anyone else's, for he had always hated the Romans and been sympathetically inclined towards Persia. On this occasion he took full advantage of the greater conviction his arguments seemed to carry and tried to magnify the affair out of all proportion, claiming that in view of the situation there was no need for discussion but that rather it was a case for immediately embracing the cause of Persia. 8 When the others said that it was not advisable to proceed to change their whole way of life on the spur of the moment, but that they should first embark on a careful and lengthy discussion of the issues involved, he leapt up angrily, rushed into their midst and began to harangue them like an orator in a popular assembly. He was a remarkably gifted speaker for a barbarian and had an instinctive appreciation of the finer points of rhetoric. He now addressed himself to his audience in the following terms:

9. "If the Romans confined their injuries to words and thoughts, then we would still be effectively repaying them in kind. But are we to stand for the present state of affairs, in which whilst they have already committed the most monstrous act of aggression we ourselves hang around debating the issue and let the opportunity for retaliation slip through our fingers? 2 It is no longer possible to say that whereas they have not yet been shown to be openly engaged in active hostility against us a likely case could be made out for accusing them of hostile intent, nor indeed, will it be necessary to produce arguments in order to establish the existence of a secret plot. 3 But it is no longer possible only because Gubazes our great and noble king has been unceremoniously disposed of like the meanest of his subjects. Gone forever is the ancient dignity of the Colchians. Henceforth there will be no question of our aspiring to rule over others. No, we must rest content if we are allowed to avoid sinking to a much lower level than that of those who until recently were our dependents. 4 And is it not an extraordinary state of affairs if we are going to sit around examining the question of whether we should regard the men responsible for this situation as our worst enemies or our friends? 5 Yet it must be realized that their insolence will not confine itself to this action. Even if we drop the charge against them they will not leave us alone. On the contrary they will ill-treat us with greater impunity

if we do nothing. When they find people docile their insolence knows no bounds and they habitually despise anyone who treats them with deference. 6 Their Emperor is utterly unscrupulous and delights in continually creating tension and instability. Hence the suddenness with which the hideous crime was perpetrated, since it was committed at his express command and with their willing collaboration. 7 We have all but suffered the rape of our country at their hands though there was no prior aggression on our part or spontaneous outbreak of hostility. While appearing to remain on the same friendly terms as before they have committed the most unspeakable of crimes, as though seized with a sudden access of insane cruelty and hatred and all the other dark and brutal passions.

8 How different are the ways of the Persians! Those whose friendship they have had from the start they go out of their way to treat with unfailing kindness, reserving their anger for their enemies, as long as they remain enemies. 9 I could have wished that the Colchian state were still possessed of its ancient might, needing no help from foreign powers and completely independent in all matters that touch upon war and peace. 10 But, since whether through the passage of time or the whims of fortune or perhaps through a combination of both we have been reduced to the status of a subject people, I think it pays us to join the side whose attitude is the more reasonable and whose goodwill towards their allies is not liable to fluctuation. 11 In this way we will get the better of our real enemies since their past misconduct will not go unpunished and we shall have taken the necessary steps to ensure our future safety. 12 For that sly and ingratiating manner which enables them to injure the unsuspecting by hiding their true selves behind a facade of suavity and charm will be completely wasted on us owing to our open and uncompromising hostility towards them. 13 Even if they should try to make war on us they would be fighting on enemy territory and would never be able to stand up to the combined strength of the Lazi and the Persians or even to sustain the first shock of our arms. 14 It is not long since they engaged a detachment of Persians with their entire army and were at once ignominiously put to flight. They ran so fast that even now they have scarcely recovered their breath and though they were roundly beaten in every other way they did excel their pursuers in one respect — the speed of their flight!

10. One might name as the obvious and immediate cause of this rout a combination of cowardice and bad judgement, and indeed such shameful defects seem to be part and parcel of their whole make-up. But the addition of deliberate wickedness to natural depravity tipped the scales so heavily against them that their plight was made doubly disastrous, and by their foul misdeed they forfeited the protection of Providence. 2 For it is not so much by force of arms as by godfearing conduct that victory is assured, and

I find it inconceivable that heaven should intervene on the side of abandoned wickedness. Therefore we will have no truck with these men, if we have any sense, since they lack sound judgement and have moreover incurred the wrath of the being whose special province is the safety of all things. 3 Events have shown more clearly than words can that our joining the Persian side will be an easy and advantageous course to pursue and will win the approval of the Deity. 4 Nor would such a course carry with it the implication, from a human point of view, of treachery or unjust aggression on our part. Indeed we have seen fit on many occasions in the past to abide by the terms of our alliance in spite of the insulting behaviour of the Romans because we felt that to shift one's allegiance on account of provocation which though serious was not altogether unbearable was an extremely shabby thing to do. 5 But to suffer outrageous and irremediable harm without a murmur of protest, not to show a flicker of anger in the face of monstrous inhumanity, that, I say, is not the reaction of sensible men but of cowards and weaklings who contrive to mask their callous indifference to the fate of their country with a specious pretence of political maturity. 6 It is hard to imagine how any other people could become the victims of a fouler crime or how, if they did, they could possibly overlook it. Similarly we too must not turn a blind eye to what has happened but must recoil in disgust from the thought of displaying indifference to the memory of our king and betraying a desire to flatter his murderers. 7 If it were possible for him to be present here he would be inveighing bitterly against our neglect of duty which has enabled these guilty wretches to continue to reside in his land instead of being expelled from it long ago. 8 But since he will never again be present to address you, bethink yourselves of the man and summon up a mental picture of him standing in the midst of the assembled company, pointing to the wound on his neck and his chest and imploring his fellow-countrymen to take vengeance even at this late hour on his enemies. Which of you then would brook a moment's doubt or discussion concerning the justice of Gubazes' claim to the sympathy of the Colchians? 9 Yes, we must be on our guard lest through our fear of being branded as deserters we allow ourselves to become participants in the crime and throw away the chance of avenging the dead man. We will look a great deal more treacherous if our affection for him lasts no longer than his lifetime and if when once we lose the man we lose his memory too.

10 When all is as it should be it is the height of folly to change one's whole way of life, but when the reverse is the case it pays, I think, to adapt oneself speedily to events. Reason is the criterion upon which resolution should be based and a dogged attachment to the status quo is not always something to be praised but only when it makes good sense. But when it is a question of giving heed to unworthy considerations and clinging tenaciously

to a false position then the man who maintains his previous stand is more blameworthy than the man who changes sides.

11 When the Persians learn from us of this decision and realize its implications their hearts will with good reason warm to us and they will fight on our behalf, for they are generous and magnanimous and especially good at divining their neighbours intentions. Besides they will be gaining, without even having to ask for it, the alliance of a country of vital strategic importance and considerable military strength, which they themselves would go to great trouble and expense to possess. 12 Make it therefore your one object to get down to business and disclose your intentions. By so doing we should greatly enhance our prestige while at the same time pursuing a just, honourable and advantageous course of action".

11. As soon as Aeetes had concluded this speech it was greeted with an excited clamour from the assembled crowd who wanted to change sides there and then, even though the Persians had not been apprised of their intentions and even though they were in no position to effect the change-over without attracting attention or to defend themselves if the Romans used force to prevent them. Devoid of organization and planning, with no regard for the future or for the consequences of their action, they were nonetheless impatient to get started. The revolutionary fervour of a mob and the fanaticism of a barbarian people were not the only factors at work. Their own sense of the rightness of their cause and the electrifying effect of his words also served to heighten their agitation and inflame their passions.

2 While they were in this troubled and turbulent state a man called Phartazes, a person of outstanding influence among the Colchians, who combined discretion with popularity, restrained their ardour by requesting them not to resort to action before they had first given him a hearing. 3 Out of respect for him they reluctantly consented to stay where they were and hear him out. So he came into their midst and addressed them in the following words:

4 "That what you heard has had a profoundly disturbing effect upon your minds is not surprising. You have in fact succumbed to a magnificent piece of oratory. The power of eloquence is indeed hard to combat. No man is proof against its well-aimed shafts, least of all those who have never before experienced them. But that does not mean that it cannot be countered by the prudent exercise of the faculty of reason and by bringing critical discernment to bear on the realities of a situation. 5 Do not, therefore, accept statements whose credibility turns out on closer inspection to rest not on any considerations of honesty or utility but solely on the suddenness and novelty of their appeal. Rather must you realize that however attractive they may appear better options do in fact exist. Furthermore, that you were easily won over should itself be a clear proof of the deception practised on you.

6 The man who is advocating a dishonest stand has greater need of impressive arguments and fine words; thus by effectively sugaring the pill he quickly enlists the support of the more simple-minded. 7 That is precisely what happened to you when Aeetes contrived to lend an air of attractive novelty to his tendentious exposition. You have no conception how thoroughly you have been hoodwinked. Yet, if nothing else, one can hardly fail to note how he started off by dragging in a completely irrelevant question. 8 As though you were all saying that what had happened was not serious, refusing to condemn the brutal murder and concentrating all your attention on the question of whether the murderers of Gubazes were really in the wrong, he came forward and delivered a lengthy indictment of them, in which he devoted much discussion to proving what had already been established. 9 I for my part regard as the vilest and most abandoned wretches whom I would gladly see put to the most horrible of deaths not only those who struck the blows and performed the actual killing with their own hands but all those too who had the chance to prevent it and did nothing about it. And I include those who were delighted and even those who were not particularly distressed at the crime. 10 But the fact that I entertain such feelings does not make defection to the Persians into a sound policy. By what logic could the abandonment of principles on their part be construed as implying the necessity for a similar course of action on ours? It is hardly consistent to be angered at their treachery while ourselves incurring a similar reproach.

11 So we must not now dwell on the unalterable and irrevocable past lest by deliberating in a spirit of anger we allow our judgement to be clouded and deprive ourselves of the chance of finding a better solution. No, we must keep our heads without appearing to lose our hearts and take thought in advance to ensure the successful conduct of our affairs. Only fools spend their time brooding in perpetual resentment over past ills. Wise men are inured to the whims of fortune and undismayed by chance or change. They do not react to past deprivation by destroying all hope of success for the future.

12. Aeetes' pro-Persian sentiments are of long standing and so is his desire to bring us into an alliance with Persia. This policy he is advocating by trying to scare us like so many children into believing that the Romans will not stop at what they have done but that their effrontery will assume still more alarming proportions. Their Emperor is also credited with being an arch-trouble-maker and is supposed to have ordered the murder personally, the design itself having been hatched and elaborated long before its execution. While making these allegations he praises the Persians to the skies thinking that that will make us desert immediately and become the humble petitioners of those who are by nature our deadliest enemies. 2 His

every remark is aimed at this objective. Right from his opening words he goes to great pains and to great lengths to secure the realization of his pet schemes. And indeed his uncritical harangue has the effect of confusing and frustrating the whole process of deliberation. 3 It is the function of deliberation to take precedence always and to lead the way, subjecting all that remains unclear to a rigorous scrutiny. When the course to be pursued has been determined, then and only then does the desire to act upon the decisions arrived at become a necessary and relevant factor. 4 But Aeetes has put the cart before the horse and, before attempting to clarify the issue, has already embarked upon a decision. Yet what is the use of deliberation if the matter has been prejudged?

5 Bring an unbiassed mind to bear, fellow Colchians, on the matter under consideration and do not allow your views to be coloured by preconceived notions and ulterior motives. We cannot force events to fit into a pattern of our own choosing. That would be absurd. No, it behoves us to follow them step by step, subjecting them to the rational analysis of a lucid and independent mind. Such a procedure would enable us to form an accurate picture of what has happened and to discover where our true interests lie. 6 Now if you deliberate in this fashion it will immediately become apparent to you that the conspiracy against Gubazes' life was not the doing of the Roman forces, nor even of all the generals, and still less of their Emperor. It is already common knowledge among the Romans that Rusticus and Martin out of envy for his good fortune embarked on their own private piece of wickedness not just without the co-operation of the other leaders but even in the face of their evident displeasure. 7 I consider it unjust as well as unprofitable to do violence to the laws of our community, which we set out to cherish, on account of the wrong-doing of one or perhaps two individuals and to do away with the whole of our familiar pattern of life which means so much to us, on so slender a pretext. We would also be branding ourselves as the betrayers of those who are guarding our land and imperilling their own lives so that we can live in comfort, and most heinous of all we would be showing contempt for the dignity of the true faith in all its outward and inward manifestations. 8 For that is precisely what we shall seem to be doing if we join forces with the violent antagonists of the Deity. If they debar us from the practice of our religion and force us to adopt theirs, then what more horrible fate than that could we suffer both in this world and in the next? What will we gain (let us put it this way) if we win the whole of Persia and suffer the loss of our souls? [7] 9 Even if they were tolerant we would certainly not be able to count on their lasting goodwill. On the contrary it would be an illusory and insecure arrangement, a mere temporary

[7] cf. Matt. 16:26

expedient. 10 There can be no real fellowship and no lasting bond between men of different religion not even under the stimulus of fear or of some previous act of kindness. A common religion is the one indispensable precondition for such a relationship. In its absence even the tie of kinship suggests an affinity which is only so in name while in reality there is no common ground whatsoever. 11 What then do we stand to gain from going over to the Persians if even so they will remain our enemies and we shall only succeed in making ourselves more vulnerable in that it is more difficult to guard against the enemy from within than the enemy from without? 12 But let us assume for the sake of argument that there is nothing immoral or disreputable about such a move and that the Persians are a hundred per cent trustworthy and reliable and will never fail to honour the terms of the future treaty. Yet granted that this were really the case and assuming that none of the other objections held good we would not be in a strong enough position to act. 13 How could we desert to a foreign power while the Romans are still in charge and have such a huge concentration of first-rate troops on our soil under the command of generals of no mean ability? How could we possibly avoid suffering the most savage reprisals when those who were supposed to come to our aid would be lingering in the region of Iberia and advancing at snail's pace whilst our avengers were occupying the whole of our country with their troops billeted in our cities?

13. And yet this good fellow informs us, basing his claim on recent events, that they will not even be able to sustain the first shock of our arms. Though it should be perfectly obvious that the vicissitudes of war do not conform to a set pattern and that the failures of the moment are not doomed to be similarly unsuccessful on each and every occasion. On the contrary victory often follows in the wake of defeat and cures the distress it has caused. 2 We must not therefore become over-confident on the grounds that habitual defeat in every engagement has come to be expected of them. For if the sole cause of their defeat has been their failure to make the right decision then we should let that be a warning to ourselves to be on our guard against the dangers of precipitate action. 3 So on no account should we regard what has happened as a clear indication that we shall get the better of them. Indeed it is only reasonable to suppose that those who have blundered in the past and have learnt from experience what to avoid will make good their previous omissions by their vigilance for the future. 4 And if the Deity is angry with them because of the heinous crime they have committed against the dead man and that is the reason for their present plight, what need is there for us to appear on the scene to give a helping hand as though He were not up to the task of seeing that justice is done but required help from us? We shall certainly have reached the acme of impiety if we dishonour by our defection the beneficent Providence which even without our doing

anything fights righteously on our behalf. 5 So let no one introduce into his speech the figure of the dead man uttering the most unmanly complaints and beseeching his fellow countrymen to feel pity for him and pointing to his wounds. Such behaviour may perhaps accord well with the portrayal of some pusillanimous and effeminate wretch, but it should never be attributed to a king and to a king of the Lazi at that, and least of all to Gubazes. 6 If he were present here he would, like the pious and rightminded man he was, reproach us for entertaining such proposals and would bid us not to be so dejected and faint-hearted and not to resolve to run away like a gang of slaves. He would bid us rather to recover the dignity and self-reliance of Colchians and of free men and to stand up courageously to misfortune, not allowing ourselves to be induced to do anything dishonourable or unworthy of our country's history and remaining true to its present obligations, secure in the knowledge that Providence will not abandon our nation.

7 Now, if these are the sort of sentiments that are likely to meet with the approval of the very man who was brutally murdered, is it not altogether extraordinary that we, who claim to be motivated by our affection towards him, should hold the opposing view-point? 8 Indeed I am afraid that we shall be severely punished merely for toying with the idea of following such a course. If the prospects of the intended defection were far from clear and the success of the issue could be said to hang in the balance, it would still be highly dangerous to make so momentous a decision depend solely upon chance, though the advocates of this policy would very probably have less to fear from their impudence. 9 But if it is shown to be a demonstrably bad policy from every conceivable point of view then how can we fail to hate the authors of such a suggestion? Enough then has, I think, been said to make it quite plain that we should steer clear of such a course.

10 In conclusion I propose that we should send a report of what has happened to the Emperor of the Romans to enable him to visit with condign punishment those most responsible for the outrage. I propose also that if he proves willing to do so we should put an end to our dispute with the Romans and resume normal co-operation in both the civil and the military spheres. 11 But if he should reject our petition then we shall have to consider whether it will not suit us to explore some other avenue. In this way we would not appear to be unmindful of the dead nor would we give the impression of acting on impulse rather than judgement in the conduct of our affairs".

14. When this speech too had been concluded the Colchians had a change of heart. What made them relent was chiefly the fear that a change of allegiance would deprive them of the right to practise their religion.

2 Once Phartazes' view had prevailed a deputation composed of the flower of the nation's nobility reported the circumstances of Gubazes'

murder to the Emperor Justinian. They gave him full details of the shabby and fraudulent affair, revealing that neither had Gubazes been convicted of having had dealings with the Persians nor had he been implicated in any other kind of sinister machinations against the Romans. What had happened, they said, was that when he had rebuked them with justifiable severity for committing a whole series of careless blunders, Martin and Rusticus and their henchmen had retorted by producing this trumped-up charge and destroying an innocent man. 3 They begged him to perform this one act of kindness for the sake of the dead man: not to let the crime go unpunished and to nominate as their king not some foreigner or outsider but Tzathes the younger brother of Gubazes, who was staying in Constantinople at the time. In this way their ancestral constitution would once more be upheld and the unbroken succession and integrity of the royal line maintained.

4 Convinced of the justice of their request, the Emperor hastened to bring about its fulfilment. So he sent Athanasius, one of the leading senators, to conduct a full judicial inquiry into the affair and to try the case according to Roman law. 5 On his arrival he immediately sent Rusticus to the city of Apsarus where he had him imprisoned and kept under close surveillance. Meanwhile John who had deceived the Emperor and had committed the outrage with his own hands had absconded in an attempt to save himself by flight. But it so happened that he was intercepted by Mestrianus, one of the officers of the imperial body-guard who had been sent there to attend upon Athanasius and execute whatever judgement he might pronounce. So Mestrianus arrested John and marched him off to Athanasius for judgement. 6 Athanasius sent him too to Apsarus, with instructions that both prisoners should remain incarcerated until the preliminary proceedings for the trial were completed.

15. By the beginning of spring Nachoragan was in Mucheirisis. He mustered his troops at once and made vigorous preparations for war. The Romans for their part concentrated their forces around Nesos and also began to make preparations, with the result of course that the proceedings of the trial were adjourned, since military considerations seemed to take priority over all else

2 Meanwhile Tzathes had arrived from Constantinople accompanied by the general Soterichus. He had received his ancestral title together with the royal insignia from the hand of the Emperor in accordance with a time-honoured tradition. The insignia consist of a gold crown set with precious stones, a robe of cloth of gold extending to the feet, scarlet shoes and a turban similarly embroidered with gold and precious stones. It is not lawful, however, for the kings of the Lazi to wear a purple cloak, only a white one being permitted. Nevertheless it is not an altogether commonplace garment since it is distinguished by having a brilliant stripe of gold fabric woven

across the middle of it. Another feature of the royal insignia is the clasp, resplendent with jewelled pendants and other kinds of ornament, with which the cloak is fastened. 3 As soon as Tzathes set foot on his country's soil splendidly arrayed in the royal apparel the generals and the entire Roman army greeted him and accorded him all due honour and respect, forming a procession in front of him, their armour and weapons specially polished for the occasion and most of them riding on horseback. 4 In their joy at the sight the Lazi managed to forget their distress for the moment and, falling into line, accompanied him to the sound of trumpets and with banners raised aloft. The procession was of a pomp and magnificence beyond what is usually associated with the Lazian monarchy.

5 Once established on the throne Tzathes proceeded to take over the reins of government and to rule his people as he thought fit and in accordance with the dictates of ancestral custom. 6 Soterichus therefore set off immediately to accomplish the mission on which he had been sent. He was in fact carrying a sum of money from the Emperor which he was to distribute to the neighbouring barbarian peoples according to the terms of their alliance. This payment had long been customary and was made on an annual basis. 7 He took his elder sons Philagrius and Romulus with him so that straight after leaving home they should be given some timely training in physical endurance, since both of them had already come to man's estate and were quite able-bodied. The third son Eustratius had been left behind in Constantinople because he was still very young and was in any case not physically fit.

8 Eventually Soterichus reached the land of the Misimians who are subjects of the king of the Colchians as are also the Apsilians though they differ from these in both language and customs. They are indeed situated farther north than the Apsilians and slightly more towards the East. 9 When he got there, at any rate, it suddenly entered into their heads that he wanted to betray to the Alans one of their fortresses situated near the border with Lazica, which they call Buchlous. The idea behind this, they thought, was that the envoys from the more distant peoples could all congregate there and collect their pay so that whoever brought the money would henceforth be spared the necessity of travelling round the foot-hills of the Caucasus and setting out in person to meet them.

16. The Misimians may have received intelligence to this effect or they may simply have acted on suspicion. At all events they sent a two-man deputation consisting of Chadus and Thyanes, both of them persons of distinction. 2 When they found the general encamped near to the fortress in question their suspicions were confirmed and they exclaimed, "that was a very bad turn you planned to do us! You have no right to let anyone else steal what belongs to us, still less ought you to be harbouring such designs

yourself. But if this is really not your intention then make sure that you leave here as quickly as possible and move to another spot. You shall not want for provisions. We shall bring you everything you need. But rest assured you are not staying here, for we will not have you loitering on any pretext".

3 This impertinence was too much for Soterichus who, thinking it intolerable that the subjects of the Colchi who were themselves dependents of the Romans should adopt an insolent tone towards Romans, ordered his body-guard to strike them with their batons. Whereupon they thrashed them mercilessly and sent them back half-dead. 4 After this had happened Soterichus did not imagine that he would encounter any hostility but stayed where he was, as though he had simply dealt with some misdemeanour on the part of his own servants and consequently had nothing to fear. When night came he went to bed without bothering to mount a guard or take any precautions. Likewise his sons and the body-guard and all the other servants and slaves that were with him were less careful about their sleeping-arrangements than they would have been in enemy territory.

5 Meanwhile the Misimians refused to tolerate the insulting treatment they had received. So the made a heavily-armed attack on the place, entering the general's quarters and killing first those servants who acted as chamberlains. 6 In the ensuing noise and confusion, which was of course considerable, Soterichus and those nearest to him became aware of the disaster. They leapt out of their beds in terror, but they were still heavy-headed and dazed with sleep and in no position to defend themselves. 7 Some of them got their feet caught in the blankets and could not walk. Others made a dash for their swords in an attempt to stand up and fight it out, which was pitifully ineffectual, since they were in the dark and completely helpless. They kept banging their heads against the walls and had no recollection of where they had put their weapons. Others feeling that they were already trapped gave up all hope and did nothing but shout and utter loud lamentations. 8 Taking full advantage of their consternation, the barbarians fell upon them and slew Soterichus and his sons and all the others with the exception of the odd survivor who managed to leap to safety through some emergency door or to escape detection by some other means. 9 After doing this the inhuman wretches despoiled the dead men, taking away with them everything else that the place contained and even appropriating the Emperor's money. Altogether they acted as though the men they had killed were really their enemies and not the general and other representatives of a friendly power.

17. It was not until the massacre was over when they had glutted their lust for blood and their frenzy seemed to be subsiding that they began to reflect upon the consquences of their action and to grasp the full implications of the step they had taken. They realized then that it would not be long

before the Romans came thirsting for vengeance and that they would not be able to stop them. 2 So they embarked upon a course of open defection and made representations to the Persians asking them to accept their allegiance and afford them henceforth the protection accorded to their subjects.

3 When the Roman generals received a full account of what had happened they were angry and distressed, but they were unable to deal with the Misimians straightaway because they had their hands tied with matters of a more serious and pressing nature. 4 Nachoragan at the head of an army of sixty thousand fighting men was already advancing on Nesos where Martin and Justin the son of Germanus and their troops were assembled. 5 Now there was a detachment of mercenaries called Sabirs (a Hunnic people) who were serving as heavy infantry in the Roman army. They numbered well nigh two thousand and were under the command of some of their most distinguished leaders, namely Balmach, Cutilzis and Iliger. These Sabirs then, had, on the instructions of Martin, encamped near the plain of Archaeopolis, the idea being that they should do as much damage as possible to the enemy, who would probably be crossing over by that route, so as to make their passage both more difficult and most dangerous.

6 When Nachoragan learnt that the Sabirs had been strategically placed with this end in view he selected about three thousand men from the Dilimnite contingent and despatched them against the Sabirs, bidding them like the braggart he was to wipe them out so that there would not be any of them left to ambush his rear while he was marching into battle. 7 The Dilimnites are among the largest of the nations on the far side of the Tigris whose territory borders on Persia. They are warlike in the extreme and, unlike most of the Persians, do not fight principally with the bow and the sling. They carry spears and pikes and wear a sword slung over one shoulder. To the left arm they tie a very small dirk and they hold out shields and bucklers to protect themselves with. One could hardly describe them simply as light-armed troops nor for that matter as the type of heavy-armed infantry that fight exclusively at close quarters. 8 For they both discharge missiles from a distance when the occasion arises and engage in hand-to-hand fighting, and they are expert at charging an enemy phalanx and breaking its close-knit ranks with the weight of their charge. They can re-form their own ranks with ease and adapt themselves to any contingency. Even steep hills they run up without difficulty thus seizing in advance all points of vantage, and when put to flight they escape with lightning rapidity whereas when they are the attackers they press the pursuit with perfect timing and co-ordination. Well-versed as they are in practically every type of warfare they inflict considerable harm on their enemies. 9 They are accustomed for the most part to fight alongside the Persians, though not as the conscript contingents of a

subject people since they are in fact free and independent and it is not in their nature to submit to any form of compulsion.

18. This detachment of Dilimnites, then, set out at nightfall against the Sabirs, since they thought it preferable to make a surprise attack on the Sabirs while they were still asleep and thus annihilate them with a minimum of trouble. And they would not, I suppose, have been deceived of their hopes had it not been for a chance encounter which proved their undoing. 2 But it so happened that while they were on the way under cover of darkness to accomplish their mission a solitary Colchian fell in with them. Seizing him with alacrity they forced him to show them the way to the Sabirs. He was only too eager to do as he was told and set off at the head of them. When he reached a thickly-wooded glen, however, he quietly crouched down and slipped away. Having successfully eluded his pursuers he ran hard and managed to reach the camp of the Huns before they did. 3 When he got there he found them all sound asleep. "Wretched men", he shrieked at the top of his voice, "another minute and you will all be dead".

As soon as he had thus awakened them he told them that the enemy would be there any moment. 4 They started up in alarm, armed themselves, left the enclosure of their fortified camp and splitting up into two bodies took cover. Moreover they left the entrance unguarded and their wooden and canvas huts standing in exactly the same position as before. 5 Owing to their ignorance of the terrain the Dilimnites went by a very round-about route though they did reach the camp of the Huns before daybreak. With fatal confidence they rushed in and soon were all inside. 6 Creeping up noislessly lest the enemy should be awakened by what they heard they drove their spears into the beds and the huts, seemingly killing them in their sleep. 7 But just when they thought that their mission was already accomplished the Sabirs suddenly rushed out of their hiding places and fell on them from both sides. The Dilimnites were completely shattered by the unexpected turn of events and finding themselves caught in their own trap did not know where to turn. Flight was no easy matter, penned up as they were in a narrow and confined space. Nor could they clearly distinguish the enemy in the twofold uncertainty of panic and night-fighting. 8 The result was a massacre in which they did not even so much as make an attempt to defend themselves. Eight hundred men were killed while the rest barely managed to get clear, only to wander about distractedly not knowing which way to go. Often when they thought they had already fled to a safe distance they would keep going round in circles ending up where they had started and stumbling into the enemy. 9 This sort of thing went on all night. At daybreak when the first light began to dawn the survivors immediately recognized the route they had taken and ran straight for the Persian lines though even so the Sabirs were hard on their heels.

10 Babas, the commander of those Roman forces that had been stationed in Lazica for a very long time, happened on that occasion to spend the night in Archaeopolis where his ears were assailed from every direction by a deafening noise and shouting. 11 As long as it was dark and there was no way of telling what was going on he kept very quiet and did not venture forth. But when the sun came streaming over the mountain ridges he got an unmistakeable view of what was happening and saw clearly that the Dilimnites were fleeing before the Sabirs. Whereupon he rushed out of the city himself with such troops as formed his immediate entourage and dispatched another not inconsiderable portion of the enemy with the result that out of such a large force there was not a thousand men in all who reached Nachoragan.

19. Straight after the failure of this attempt Nachoragan left for Nesos and camping close to the Romans invited Martin to a parley. 2 On Martin's arrival he said: "You are such a shrewd and able general and a person of great influence among the Romans, and yet far from showing any inclination to stop the two monarchs from engaging in a mutually exhausting conflict you have allowed them to persist in the protracted ruination of their respective states. 3 If therefore you are agreeable to the idea of a negotiated settlement, why not move with your army to the Pontic city of Trebizond, whilst we Persians shall remain here? In this way we shall discuss the terms of the armistice at our leisure using trusted messengers to convey our views. 4 If you do not voluntarily withdraw your army from here you may rest assured that you will be driven out by force, for I hold victory in the palm of my hand. And, mark you, I wear her no less securely than I wear this". As he uttered these words he showed him the ring which he was wearing. 5 In answer to this Martin replied: "I do indeed consider peace to be the fitting object of our prayers and a most precious possession and shall help you in your efforts to reinstate her. However, I think it would be better if you were to move with all speed to Iberia while I went to Mucheirisis. That would enable us to examine the immediate situation. 6 As for victory, you may indulge in boastful talk if you wish and presumptuously imagine that she is up for sale and is there for the taking. But I say that the scales of victory are weighted according to the discretion of divine Providence, and they do not incline towards the boastful and the arrogant but towards those to whom the Architect of the universe nods his approval". 7 After Martin had given this pious and courageous reply and had shown righteous indignation at the blasphemous insolence of the barbarian they parted without any progress having been made towards a peaceful settlement. 8 Nachoragan returned to his camp and Martin to Nesos. Nachoragan felt that there was no point in staying where he was and so decided to go

to the town of Phasis[8] and lure the Romans there instead. The reason for his decision was that he received intelligence to the effect that the fortress there was especially vulnerable, being entirely constructed of wood, and that the surrounding plains were accessible and suitable for camping in. 9 It is, I suppose common knowledge that the town of Phasis takes its name from the river that flows very close to it and disembogues in its vicinity into the Euxine.[9] The town is in fact situated on the coast near to the mouth of the Phasis, and lies at a distance of not more than six parasangs due west of Nesos.

20. Late at night therefore Nachoragan immediately lowered into the river and fastened together the light craft which he had brought with him on wagons and, thus, having constructed a pontoon he conveyed all his troops over to the other side without being observed by the Romans. 2 His plan was to reach the south side of the town, from which quarter the waters of the river would not bar his access to the fort since its course runs in the direction of the north side. 3 Towards dawn he set off from the bank of the river and, after making a detour in order to bypass Nesos by as safe a distance as possible, proceeded directly on his way.

4 It was not until late in the morning that the Romans realized, to their alarm, that the Persians had crossed over. Consequently they were most anxious to reach the town before the enemy and manned all the triremes and thirty-oared ships which they had moored nearby. The boats were propelled downstream at a very great speed. 5 But Nachoragan had had a very good start and was in fact already half way between Nesos and the town. At this point he laid a barrier of timber and small boats right across the river, massing his elephants behind it in lines which extended as far as they could wade. 6 Seeing this from a distance, the Roman fleet immediately began to back water. They had a hard job rowing in reverse with the current against them, but they pulled manfully at the oars and managed to back away. 7 Even so the Persians captured two empty boats which their crews had abandoned. When faced with imminent capture the men had courageously chosen to commit themselves to the mercy of the waves. It was in fact a choice between certain and less certain danger and they preferred to take a chance. So they leapt nimbly overboard and after swimming a considerable distance underwater barely reached the safety of their comrades' ships. 8 At this point they left Buzes with his army at Nesos to take charge of everything there and to bring help in case of need. All the others were shipped along and then across the river, after which they marched overland by a different route so as to avoid running into the enemy. When they arrived at the town of Phasis they entered its gates and the generals apportioned

[8] Now Poti in the U. S. S. R.

[9] The Black Sea.

among themselves the task of manning the fortifications, since they did not feel strong enough to engage the enemy in a pitched battle. 9 Justin the son of Germanus and his men were stationed in front on the highest point, which faced towards the sea, with Martin and his forces occupying a nearby position. The middle part was held by Angilas with a contingent of Moorish troops armed with shields and lances, by Theodorus and his Tzanian heavy infantry, and by Philomathius with the Isaurian slingers and dart-throwers. 10 At some distance from these a detachment of Lombards and Heruls mounted guard under the command of Gibrus. The remaining stretch of wall which terminated at the Eastern quarter of the town was guarded by the Eastern regiments commanded by Valerian. And this completes the account of the disposition of the Roman forces defending the walls.

21. They had also built a massive rampart in front of the walls in order to withstand the first shock of an enemy attack and to serve as a buttress. They were understandably anxious about the walls in view of the fact that they were built of wood and particularly because they had crumbled and caved in with age in many places. 2 Accordingly a moat had been dug and filled up to the top with water, so that the stakes which had been driven in in great profusion were completely hidden. The latter part of this operation had been effected without difficulty by diverting the seaward outflow of the lagoon which flows into the Euxine and is known locally as the "little sea". 3 Large merchantships rode at anchor next to the sea-shore and the mouth of the river Phasis very close to the town with their boats securely suspended about the mastheads and raised aloft at such a height that they overtopped and even dwarfed the towers and battlements of the fortifications. 4 Up in the boats soldiers and the more daring and warlike of the sailors were stationed. They were armed with bows and arrows and slings and had set up catapults loaded and ready for action. 5 Other ships too had been fitted out in almost exactly the same fashion and then conveyed up the river to the opposite side of the fortifications where Valerian was in command. Their presence at this point meant that any attempt on the part of the enemy to conduct a siege at close quarters would be repulsed, since they would be shot at from a very great height on either side. 6 To ensure that these ships on the river should come to no harm two commanders, Dabragezas the Ant and Elminegeir the Hun, acting on the instructions of the generals, manned with troops from their own contingents ten skiffs of a special kind equipped with fore-and-aft rudders, and travelled up the river as far as possible. They kept a non-stop watch on the various crossing-points, sometimes sailing in the middle of the river and sometimes veering towards one or the other of its banks. 7 In the course of this operation they experienced one of war's most pleasant surprises. Even further up the river than they were, the two thirty-oared Roman vessels, whose capture without their crews by the Persians I have

already related, now lay in wait moored to the bank of the river and manned by Persians. 8 At nightfall their crews all fell asleep. The current was particularly strong and the cables were stretched by the tilting of the boats, with the result that the moorings on one of them suddenly snapped. Cut adrift and virtually without oars to propel it or a rudder to steer it, it was caught up in the current, swept away and eventually 9 consigned to Dabragezas and his men, who rejoicing at their good fortune gleefully seized their prey. The ship which they had abandoned empty had returned to them full.

22. Meanwhile Nachoragan left camp and advanced on the town with his entire army. He intended to confine himself to light skirmishing and the discharging of missiles from a distance in an attempt to test the Romans' mettle and to see whether they would come out into the open and fight. In this way he hoped to form a clear idea of what tactics to adopt in the next day's battle. 2 As soon as the Persians got within shooting distance, therefore, they immediately began, according to their usual practice, to discharge volley upon volley of arrows. Many Romans were wounded, and though some of them continued to defend the walls, others withdrew altogether from the fighting. 3 In complete disregard of Martin's instructions to the whole army that they were to stay each at his respective post and to fight from a position of safety, Angilas and Philomathius and about two hundred of their troops opened the gate in their section of the wall and made a sortie against the enemy. 4 Theodorus the commander of the Tzanian contingent tried at first to restrain them, upbraiding them for their rashness. But when they would not listen to him he fell in reluctantly with the majority decision and set off at once with them to avoid being suspected of cowardice and of seeking to cover up his ignoble ends by an impressive show of prudence and good sense. So, though he had no liking for the enterprise, he resolved to see it through to the bitter end. 5 And in fact they would almost certainly have been annihilated on the spot but for a heaven-sent miscalculation which saved them. The Dilimnites who were ranged in battle-formation at that point, perceiving the small number of the attackers stayed their ground and calmly awaited their approach. 6 When they were already near at hand the Dilimnites brought round their wings and encircled them. Hemmed in on all sides, the Romans had no further idea of harming the enemy. Indeed the mere possibility of escape seemed almost too much to hope for. 7 Forming themselves therefore into a compact body they faced about and suddenly charged with their spears levelled at those of the enemy that were positioned near the town.

When the Dilimnites saw them charging with the fury of despair they immediately opened up their ranks and made way for them, since they were unable to confront men who cared neither for their own lives nor for the consequences of their actions. 8 In this way the Romans were allowed to

rush to safety unopposed. Only too glad to get back inside the fortifications, they slammed the gate behind them. The net achievement from such a hazardous exploit was nil — they had risked their lives to save their skins!

23. Meanwhile an army of porters on the Persian side had long been toiling to fill in the moat. Their work was now complete. All gaps had been stopped and all holes had been plugged. In fact they had done such a thorough job that even a besieging army could walk over the spot and siege-engines could be brought up with little difficulty. 2 But a disproportionate amount of time had been spent on the operation considering the vast resources of manpower at their disposal. Though they threw in an enormous quantity of stones and earth it did not suffice to block up the moat, and wood was scarce except for what they cut from the forests, travelling far to get it and transporting it with incredible toil. 3 The Romans had in fact already set fire to all the surrounding countryside, burning down even the wayside inns and any other buildings in the immediate vicinity. Their purpose in doing this had been to ensure that the enemy did not have a ready supply of building material from any of these quarters. 4 No other event worth recording occurred on that day, and at nightfall Nachoragan returned to camp with his troops.

5 On the following day Martin, wishing to raise the morale of his troops and to strike dismay into the hearts of the enemy, assembled the entire Roman army with the apparent object of discussing the immediate situation. Suddenly there stepped into their midst a man covered in dust, who to judge from his appearance must have travelled a great distance, though in actual fact the whole incident had been rehearsed by Martin. His face was unfamiliar and he announced that he had just arrived from Constantinople with a letter from the Emperor. 6 Seemingly overjoyed Martin took the letter, opened it and proceeded to read it not making any secret of what he was doing or reading silently to himself but in a loud clear voice so that everybody could hear him. 7 What that document really contained was possibly something quite different, but the actual words he read out were as follows: "We have sent you a second army no smaller than the one you already have. Yet even if the enemy should happen to be numerically much stronger than you, their superior numbers will never do more than match your superior courage, so that the apparent disparity will cancel itself out. 8 But, to prevent them from boasting even of a superiority on paper, receive this army too and note that it has been sent not in response to any real or pressing need but merely to produce a dazzling and impressive display. Be of good cheer therefore and acquit yourselves with energy and enthusiasm, bearing in mind that we shall play our part to the full". 9 Martin then immediately asked the messenger where the army was. "They are not more than four Lazian parasangs away", he said, adding that when he left them they were

setting up camp near the river Neocnus. 10 Whereupon Martin, feigning anger, exclaimed, "Let them turn back and go home as fast as they can. I will not have them here on any occasion. It would be intolerable if, when these men here having for so long shared with me the hardship of so many battles are already on the verge of destroying the enemy and achieving total victory, those others should come along at the eleventh hour when their presence is no longer needed and after having shared scarcely any of the hazards receive an equal share in the glory and have their names linked with the triumphant finish of the campaign. And the greatest injustice of all is that they would reap the same material benefits as all these here present. 11 Let them stay where they are for just as long as it takes them to pack up and get started on the return journey. These men here will more than suffice for the task of bringing the last stage of the war to a successful conclusion". 12 With these words he turned round and addressed himself to the troops, saying: "May I assume that these are your sentiments too?" Whereupon they voiced their approval with a loud cheer and exclaimed that the general's view was absolutely right. 13 They for their part became more confident and were able to rely on themselves without needing help from any other quarter. The prospect of plunder fired them with ambition and a desire to surpass themselves. They were spurred on still further by their confident anticipation of immediate and unrestricted looting as though they had already destroyed the enemy and their one concern was with how they were going to divide the spoils.

24. Similary Martin's other aim was also fulfilled. The story of the relief-force soon leaked out and was in general circulation and it was not long before the news that a second Roman army had arrived at the banks of the river Neocnus and that at any moment it would be joining forces with the first one, came to the ears of the Persians themselves. 2 They were all dumbfounded and extremely alarmed at the prospect of having to do battle with fresh enemy reinforcements when they themselves were exhausted by the innumerable hardships of the struggle already sustained. Nachoragan, however, lost no time in sending a not inconsiderable detachment of Persian cavalry to patrol the route along which in his mistaken acceptance of the rumour he imagined they would be passing. 3 When they got there they devoted a great deal of misspent energy and vigilance to the task of securing the main points of vantage and then concealed themselves there and lay in wait for an enemy that was never to appear. Their idea was to fall on them when they were least expecting it and when their line of march was unguarded and to retard their progress until the beleaguered garrison was forced to surrender. 4 In this way a not inconsiderable Persian force was detached from the main body of the army and sent on a fool's errand. Even so Nachoragan, anxious to forestall the arrival of the non-existent relief-force,

led out his army forthwith and boldly advanced against the Romans, bragging openly and swearing that he would set fire on that same day to the entire city together with its inhabitants. 5 Apparently conceit had so clouded his judgement that he had forgotten that he was marching off to war, where uncertainty reigns supreme, where the scales of victory and defeat incline now one way and now the other and where above all the issue hangs on the predestined purpose of a Supreme Being. He seemed equally oblivious of the fact that in war nothing happens on a small scale, that its repercussions are truly immense, involving as they do on occasion the disruption of countless peoples and numerous cities and shaking the very pillars of human society to their foundations. 6 But his boastful arrogance rose to such a pitch that he actually gave instructions to the labourers and menials, who were scattered about the forest felling trees for firewood or possibly for the repair of siege-engines, to the effect that as soon as they saw smoke rising they were to understand it to mean that the fortifications of the Romans had already been set on fire and that they must down tools immediately and run to join him in spreading the flames. In this way one general conflagration would easily engulf everything. Flattering himself then with such notions he launched the attack.

7 Meanwhile Justin the son of Germanus was suddenly moved by, I think, divine inspiration to go as quickly as possible (he did not know that Nachoragan would be attacking at that time) to a place of worship enjoying peculiar distinction among christians, which was not far distant from the city, and invoke divine aid. 8 Having collected therefore, the pick of Martin's troop and of his own plus a five-thousand-strong force of cavalry and having armed them for battle, he rode off with them. The standards followed him and the whole operation was conducted in a regular and disciplined manner. 9 Now it so happened that neither did the Persians see Justin and his men setting out nor did they see the Persians advancing to attack. The latter in fact came by a different route and made a sudden assault on the walls. They shot even more arrows than previously, hoping in this way to strike greater terror into the hearts of the Romans and quickly take the place by storm.

25. Missiles were falling thick and fast, volley succeeding volley in such dense profusion that the surrounding air grew dark. The scene was not unlike that of a fierce blizzard or a violent burst of hail. 2 Meanwhile others were bringing up siege-engines, hurling fire-brands or hacking at the wall with axes from under the cover of the "wicker roofs" as they are called. The wall being made of wood was of course particularly vulnerable to this kind of attack. Others still were trying to undermine the foundations and bring down the whole edifice. 3 But the Romans manning the towers and battlements offered a spirited and vigorous resistance in their anxiety to

prove by their actions that they could dispense with the services of a relief-force. 4 And so the deception practised by Martin proved in the event to be useful and effective in the extreme. Indeed every man exerted himself to the utmost and they adopted every conceivable defensive measure. 5 They rained down javelins on the enemy, wounding many of them since their missiles fell on an unprotected multitude and could hardly be deflected from their course. Huge stones were rolled down on to the pent houses and went smashing through them while smaller ones were hurled from slings, shattering the shields and helmets of the Persians and forcibly deterring them from coming up too close to the wall. 6 Some of the troops posted in the ship's boats in the manner I have already described used their bows to deadly effect and inflicted heavy casualties, shooting as they did from a very great height. Others of them manipulated the catapults with great skill; and the feathered darts, which were specially designed for the purpose, being shot with tremendous force, had an enormous range with the result that many of the oncoming barbarians were still far away when both men and horses suddenly found themselves transfixed and struck down. 7 Meanwhile the shouting rose to a terrific pitch and the trumpets on either side sounded a martial strain. The Persians banged on drums and yelled louder still in order to cause alarm and terror and the neighing of horses combined with the heavy thud of shields and the noise of breastplates being smashed to produce a harsh and strident din. 8 At this point Justin the son of Germanus who was returning from the church was made aware of what was going on by the sustained and confused noise that assailed his ears. He immediately rallied his cavalry and drawing them up in regular formation gave orders for the standards to be raised aloft and called upon every man to play his part and bear in mind that it was through the workings of Providence that they had ventured outside the town in order that they might terrorize the enemy by taking them unawares and force them to raise the siege. 9 As soon as they had advanced a short distance they saw the Persians storming the walls. Whereupon they raised a sudden shout and hurled themselves at those of them that were drawn up alongside the wall facing the sea, for that was the direction from which they had come. Striking with lances, pikes and swords the Romans cut down all who were in their path, and then made a series of furious charges into the enemy's ranks thrusting them back with their shields until they dislodged them and broke up their formation.

26. Thinking that this was the army whose imminent arrival they had heard about and concluding that it had eluded the ambush set for it and had reached its destination, the Persians closed their ranks in panic and confusion and began to beat a gradual retreat. 2 Meanwhile the Dilimnites who were fighting near the middle of the wall caught a distant glimpse of the

prevailing turmoil. Leaving only a few of their number behind, the rest all set off to relieve those who were being hard pressed. 3 Whereupon the Roman commanders Angilas and Theodorus, whom I have already mentioned, perceiving the scant numbers of those that had remained made a sudden sortie from the town with a fairly large force. The Romans slew the first batch of them and then pressed in relentless pursuit upon the remainder that had taken to flight. 4 When the rest of the Dilimnites who were on their way to rescue the Persians from their difficulties saw this, they immediately turned back, determined to confront the Romans and convinced that they ought by preference to be making all haste to relieve their own kinsmen. But they rushed with such frantic and impetuous speed that they looked more like a band of fugitives than an army on the attack. They were, as they felt, rushing to the aid of their fellow-countrymen but there was about them an air of panic rather than of truculence. 5 When that part of the Persian army which was drawn up nearest to them saw the Dilimnites milling about in this apparent confusion and disorder they assumed that they must be running away and since they would not have descended to such a disgraceful course except in the face of overwhelming danger and impossible odds they too took to their heels and fled ignominiously in all directions. The flight which they had for some time been furtively envisaging now became a stark reality. 6 At this point the Dilimnites came to the same conclusion about the Persians and rushed to join them in flight, being themselves both the cause and the victims of a double misunderstanding.

7 While these events were taking place a very large number of Roman troops sallied forth from behind the walls and turned the enemy retreat into a rout, following hard on their heels and cutting down whoever happened to bring up the rear. They also attacked from different directions and fought hard against that part of the enemy which was still holding out and keeping its ranks together. 8 For, though the left wing of the barbarians had manifestly fallen apart, their right wing was still intact and was fighting a vigorous rear-guard action. In addition to serving as a sort of defensive wall their elephants kept charging the Roman infantry and throwing their ranks into confusion every time they formed them. The bowmen riding on the elephants' backs played havoc with the attackers since from their position of elevation they could pick them off with unerring aim. It was an easy task also for the cavalry squadrons to keep rushing out and harrying men who were on foot and impeded by the weight of their armour, with the result that the Romans on that side were already being forced to give ground and beat a hasty retreat.

27. Meanwhile one of their number, a man called Ognaris who was a member of Martin's body-guard, finding himself trapped in a confined space from which no escape was possible took one last desperate chance — the

fiercest of the elephants was charging at him and he struck it a violent blow with his spear just above the brow, driving the point right in and leaving the rest hanging. 2 The beast enraged by the blow and driven wild by the sight of the spear dangling in front of its eye drew back suddenly, leaping about and turning in circles. At one moment he was thrashing about with his trunk smiting large numbers of Persians and tossing them up into the air, at another he was stretching it out and trumpeting. 3 In a split second he threw off the soldiers riding on his back and trampled them to death. Then he proceeded to strike terror and confusion into the whole Persian army, causing the horses to shy as he approached them and rending and tearing with his tusks whatever came into contact with him. 4 The air was filled with cries of panic and lamentation. The horses terrorized by the ferocity of the beast no longer answered to the reins but raising their front hooves into the air threw off their riders and with much panting and snorting went careering into the midst of the army. 5 Whereupon the men all began to turn back on themselves jostling and elbowing one another as each one tried to get out of the way before the next man did. Large numbers were killed by their own side as they stumbled against the swords of their comrades and kinsmen. 6 As the confusion grew worse the Romans who had remained behind the walls joined with those who had sallied forth from the fort some time ago, and together they formed a single phalanx whose front line they strengthened as much as possible by holding out a continuous wall of shields. They then hurled themselves against an enemy that was still in complete disarray. 7 The Persians already worn out by their previous exertions were unable to withstand the impact of the charge and fled precipitately. Their flight was an irregular one and they made no attempt to keep in formation or to ward off their attackers, but simply scattered in different directions each man fending for himself as best he could. 8 Nachoragan too was as bewildered as anyone else by the startling turn of events and retreated at a gallop, signalling to all with his whip that they must flee as fast as they could, which in fact was what they were already doing. And so his boastful predictions were completely belied by what actually happened. 9 The Romans continued to pursue and kill the barbarians until Martin, feeling that enough had been accomplished, sounded the signal for them to retire and checked their lust for blood. 10 The Persians got back with difficulty to the safety of their camp, having lost not less than ten thousand fighting men in this engagement.

28. On their return from the pursuit the Romans set fire to the wicker-roofs and all the other Persian siege equipment which had been left near the wall. Thereupon a great flame flared up and as soon as the servants and porters on the Persian side who were cutting wood in the forest saw from afar the smoke rising up and ascending in spirals high into the air, the un-

fortunate wretches set off for the town thinking that what Nachoragan had earlier boasted to them had come true and that the fort was ablaze. 2 Consequently they ran all the way, fearing, I suppose, that the opportunity for action would escape them and that everything would be burnt to ashes before they got there. So they vied with one another in speed little dreaming that the first to get there would be the first to die. They were in fact all captured and killed one after the other by the Romans, as though they had come expressly for that purpose. Well nigh two thousand men met their deaths in this manner. 3 Thus Nachoragan was wholly to blame through the foolish instructions he issued for the fact that such an enormous number of labourers, men with no military training who had never before taken part in armed combat, had rushed unsuspectingly to their deaths. The whole incident is indeed a striking illustration of the baneful consequences of the sin of pride not merely for its practitioners but also for their unfortunate minions. 4 As a result of these events Roman morale was extremely high and there was a general conviction that any attempt at renewing hostilities on the part of the barbarians would result in yet another victory for the Romans. Those who were killed in action (and they did not number more than two hundred) were given an honourable burial and won universal admiration for the valour with which they had acquitted themselves. 5 The enemy dead, however, the Romans despoiled, thereby acquiring a gigantic quantity of weapons and other objects. Some of the dead were wearing on their persons not just shields and breastplates, and quivers full of arrows but solid gold collars and necklaces and ear-rings and all the other foppish and effeminate ornaments that the more aristocratic Persians bedeck themselves with in order to cut a dash and distinguish themselves from the common people.

6 Since he was running out of provisions and winter was already approaching Nachoragan deliberately created the impression that he was eagerly preparing to mount a fresh offensive. Far from putting such a plan into effect, however, he dispatched the Dilimnite contingent on the following day to take up position at close quarters where he ensured that they attracted the attention of the Romans, and while making it look as though he was about to attack, quietly set off at once with the rest of his troops for Cotaïs and Mucheirisis. 7 When he had already gone most of the way the Dilimnites broke their ranks and withdrew, which they were able to do with the greatest of ease being light-armed and moreover hardy and fleet of foot. 8 The other Persian detachment, which had been sent previously to the river Neocnus owing to Martin's ruse as I described earlier on, arrived there too. 9 On learning in fact that the Persians had been beaten and that the Romans were in control of the entire region they set off immediately by a secluded route far from the main thoroughfares and reached Mucheirisis, having played

no part in the fighting but sharing still more fully in the ignominy and humiliation of flight. 10 When the whole army had assembled Nachoragan left most of the cavalry there, putting Vahriz a Persian of very high standing in command of the force, and himself returned with a small retinue to Iberia where he intended to spend the winter.

BOOK 4

1. The Roman victory which marked the conclusion of this stage in the fighting brought with it a sort of armed truce and an immediate lull in hostilities and made it possible to proceed with the judicial enquiry into the crimes previously committed against Gubazes. 2 Accordingly Athanasius, donning the garb of the highest civic magistrates, took his seat on a raised tribunal amid great pomp and splendour. Trained shorthand writers were in attendance upon him and there was the full complement of all the other grander and more impressive officials who are especially well-versed in the niceties of legal procedure. Also present were heralds, and ushers armed with whips. All these people had been selected from the various official bureaux in Constantinople. 3 Those who were charged with that particular duty carried with them iron collars, racks and various other instruments of torture. 4 In my opinion it was no mere accident or caprice but a judicious and well-timed assessment of the situation that had led the Emperor Justinian to order that the trial be conducted with such thoroughness and meticulous observance of legal form. His object was to impress the natives by a somewhat ostentatious display of the majesty of Roman justice in order not only to accustom them better to Roman rule but also to dispel any resentment or feeling of grievance that the Colchians might still harbour in the event of its being proved that Gubazes had been guilty in the first instance of attempted defection to Persia and that consequently his murder had been perfectly justifiable. 5 If on the other hand the murderers of Gubazes were convicted of having produced a trumped-up charge and then perpetrated a vicious felony they would in that case be sentenced, paraded around in public by a herald and finally beheaded and put to the avenging sword in the sight of all men. In this way the punishment meted out would seem to be doubly terrible and severe. 6 For the Emperor knew full well that if he were to give orders for Rusticus and John to be put to death in secret and with rough justice, the Colchians would not feel that the affront to their dignity had been removed or that they had obtained adequate redress for the crime committed. 7 He realized equally that the setting up of a tribunal, in which either side stated its case while the court officials kept bustling about to ensure that each man took his stand and answered questions in the proper fashion, accompanied as it would be by the full majesty of the law and the lofty tones of forensic eloquence, all of which would serve to render more awe-inspiring the prospect of imminent death — all these things

then could not fail to give the proceedings a different and more exalted quality and to make the punishment appear equal to if not even greater than the crime. 8 Such proceedings in fact, despite their frequent occurrence there, strike awe and wonder into the hearts of the inhabitants of Constantinople, so that it is not hard to surmise what their effect would be on barbarians for whom they would constitute a complete novelty. It was, I think, in view of these considerations then that a court worthy of the traditions of Imperial Rome and Democratic Athens was set up at the foot of the Caucasus.

2. Rusticus and John were led out of prison and, being the accused, took their stand on the left. The other side was occupied by the accusers. These consisted of the ablest of the Colchians, men who were thoroughly conversant with the Greek language. 2 They first requested that the letter from the Emperor, which John had previously brought to the Generals and consequently had a direct bearing on the matter, be read out in public. The judge considered the request to be a reasonable one and it was read out in a loud clear voice by one of the officials specially appointed for this task. It ran more or less as follows: 3 "The news you have sent me is incredible and altogether extraordinary. It amounts in fact to an assertion that Gubazes is intent upon abandoning all his country's traditions and forsaking a people whose outlook is so close in all matters to that of his own nation and whose leadership is a long-established fact (we mean, of course, the Romans) in order to desert to an alien and bitterly hostile people who lack even the bond of a common religion, and all this without having suffered the slightest injury at our hands. 4 But, recognizing as we do the uncertainty and instability of the human condition which is by nature liable to a bewildering variety of fortuitous influences, we have deemed it politic to temper our disbelief and not to refrain from taking all reasonable precautions against any conceivable sinister machinations, real or imaginary, on the part of Gubazes. In view, moreover, of the uncertainty of the issue we have determined not to allow ourselves any peace of mind, to suspend judgement and to remain undecided. And yet it is monstrous never to put one's trust firmly in anyone and always to be full of fear and suspicion even in the case of one's closest associates. Nevertheless we too are but human and, therefore, cannot overcome our instinctive feelings of diffidence and distrust. 5 A sensible compromise however, which would neither involve us in harsh and precipitate action against Gubazes nor allow us to be persuaded by the seeming improbability of the charge into showing insufficient firmness, has suggested itself to us: it is that Gubazes should come to Constantinople. Send him therefore with all speed whether of his own free will or by force. 6 If knowing that this is our pleasure he nevertheless resists and refuses to come then you will seize him and drag him off, and you will be fully entitled to do so in these circum-

stances. If moreover he tries to break away and fights back, if in fact he resorts to any form of violent opposition whatsoever then we shall have clear proof of criminal intent and he will thereafter be classed as a public enemy, so that should anyone kill him once he behaved with such effrontery their action would in our view be quite in order. Consequently whoever deals with him will not be punished for having acted on his own initiative, since it will not be a question of punishing him as a murderer but rather of praising him for having killed a rebel". Such then was revealed to be the import of the Emperor's letter.

3. As soon as the judge ruled that they should proceed to state their case, the Colchians who had been authorized to conduct the prosecution eagerly began their speech. What they said was as follows: 2 "The enormity of the crime committed is in itself sufficient to condemn its perpetrators to the severest of punishments without our uttering a single word. But since it is a requirement of your laws that even in the case of notorious and outrageous offences judgment must not be passed until all the facts have been clearly stated, we have come here to give a bare recital of events. In this way we too shall fulfil the requirements of the law, though our language will be simple and unadorned and quite unequal to the magnitude of the crimes committed. 3 What semblance of an excuse will they find for the cold-blooded murder of a man of such exalted rank who was bound to you by ties of friendship, alliance, hospitality and by a common religion, a man in fine who possessed all the attributes of a most intimate associate and friend? What vestige of an excuse, then, will be left them once they are shown to have behaved with extreme hostility towards you by virtually promoting the interests of the enemy? The murdered man was a king, a king of no mean nation, a great force for virtue and one who, far more than his murderers ever did, had always had the interests of the Romans at heart.

4 The Colchian state is in ruins, indeed it would be more accurate to say, 'The Empire is in ruins', given that we constitute a not inconsiderable fraction of its subjects. The stability and integrity of your regime has been destroyed and your own power is sadly weakened as a result. For a state which is not firmly supported throughout its entire structure no longer has any title to be considered a unified political entity. Indeed to call it a state becomes a contradiction in terms once its unity has been drastically impaired. 5 Now the very men who have brought about this situation say that you must take into account not the appalling consequences of their action but the spirit in which it was done, and they would have you proceed by an obscure and specious form of argumentation to conjure up a fanciful picture of the benefits that have accrued to you therefrom rather than give any credence to the manifest harm already experienced. 6 Even before the trial in fact they thought by dint of repeating these sophistries to mislead the

masses. If therefore they are going to put forward this type of argument in a court of law then they had better realize that it is not in keeping with the principles of Roman justice to turn a blind eye to such a glaring and flagrant offence in order to be deceived by such obscure allegations and trumped-up charges as theirs. It is intolerable that they should openly admit that they have killed Gubazes and yet persist in making the wild assertion that the common good has benefited immensely from their action. 7 How can such glaring inconsistencies be reconciled? By what logic shall we describe the act as an atrocity while at the same time praising the public-spirited intent of its perpetrators? The two notions of public good and illegal violence have from time immemorial been diametrically oppposed. Likewise cruelty and justice are poles apart. There is no common ground between them and no possible point of contact.

4. But if we confine ourselves to a bare examination of the end in view even on that score they will be convicted of malice aforethought, since the policy they adopted has the blessing of Persia. These murderers therefore are not fit to be called Romans, nor should they be judged with the indulgence extended to one's fellow countrymen but rather as though they were your worst enemies, since they are already divided from you by the common law of humanity even if not yet by your own written code. 2 For actions, not distance, are the only proper criterion for determining what is alien and hostile. Whoever deliberately plays into the hands of the enemy may himself with good reason be deemed an enemy, even if he is close at hand, even if he is serving in the same army, even if he is of the same blood. 3 But they claim that they did not kill a friend or a king but an enemy and a rebel and an active sympathizer of Persia. Yes, in their criminal folly they have even gone so far as to charge the dead man with conspiracy to betray the state to the Persians. And things have now come to such a pass that even in death the unhappy man has no rest but must stand trial for high treason in circumstances where he can gain nothing from an acquittal. 4 What law is there in force among yourselves or among barbarians which would sanction the practice of first pronouncing and executing the sentence and then proceeding to draw up the indictment? Setting themselves up as judges, enemies and accusers all rolled into one, they inflicted upon an innocent man without even giving him a trial the punishment appropriate to one who had been genuinely convicted of seeking to assume arbitrary and unconstitutional powers. 5 Now when they are supposed to be defending themselves they have come bringing accusations against the victim of their own injustice. Yet if they believed in the charges they are making they ought first to have embarked openly on criminal proceedings against him and been the first to open the case for the prosecution before killing him and not to have waited until they were themselves accused and then bring out a counter-accusation.

6 If everyone is entitled to do this sort of thing then why did we not take the law into our hands also and kill these murderous brutes, since when we were brought to justice we could always have countered the charges preferred against us by arraigning them posthumously with their previous crimes, and thus attempted to demonstrate that two wrongs make a right? Given in fact the incontrovertible nature of the evidence for the prior events to which we had reacted in anger, we would have been punishing them with greater justice and the case for the defence would have proceeded with all due propriety. 7 But there is no place for such outrageous conduct either on our part or on anybody else's, that is if you are to live according to your traditional standards of legality. For if whoever feels so inclined is permitted to kill off his private enemies in this summary and offhand manner, and the practice becomes such a regular occurrence that no limit is set to criminal daring, how long do you imagine the authority of the judiciary will remain unimpaired? 8 In the mutual slaughter and the endless chain of plots and counterplots that will ensue you will not be able to punish or bring to heel the culprits in time, and as your nation rushes blindly to destruction all possibility of impartial investigation will be precluded by a wave of personal vendettas.

5. Yet the accused contend that there is nothing very dreadful about the death of a single individual who happens also to be a traitor, especially in view of the salutary and sobering effect it will have on all your allies. 2 I am in complete agreement. If it is a question of destroying real traitors, then the more the merrier. The mere fact of ridding the world of such men is in itself a sufficient boon, even if no other benefit derives from the action of their slayers. But if without there being a shred of evidence to convict him a person of very great distinction is suddenly struck down and punished like a common traitor caught red-handed in the act, one is perhaps entitled to ask exactly how that is meant to have a salutary and sobering effect upon your allies? 3 Surely they would be much more likely to disavow their alliance if they suspected that you were party to such an outrage. Indeed they could hardly avoid the inescapable conclusion that if you show so little concern for justice and humanity in your dealings with your close friends and associates you will scarcely prove more reliable in your dealings with strangers who have been recognized merely in response to some sudden and pressing need. 4 But you were not privy to their plan nor will the whole Roman people be involved in the guilt which attaches to them as individuals, nor for that matter will your long-standing reputation for honesty, reliability and justice be eclipsed and overshadowed by their nefarious conduct. 5 On the contrary it is our opinion that this tribunal has been set up to preserve the good name of the nation and to make it clear to everybody that you wish to dissociate yourselves entirely from the action of those who have inflicted

such cruel and monstrous indignities on the Colchians. 6 Perhaps at this point the minds of most men are perplexed and undecided, perhaps they even find your motives open to doubt. But once, my Lord, your verdict, which will be their death-warrant, is pronounced then it will become crystal clear that it is your practice not to betray your friends but to punish those who do wrong.

7 As for the defence which they appear to be putting up, it is in reality tantamount to an open admission of guilt. The Emperor's letter in fact instructs the generals to send Gubazes to Constantinople using persuasion in the first instance and even force should he refuse to co-operate and in the event of his resisting compulsion not on any account killing him until he resorted to actual revolt and armed hostilities. 8 These men, however, without even themselves being generals and without in any other way being authorized to work their wills on him, killed their hapless victim in the twinkling of an eye. They did not urge him to go to Constantiniple. They did not find him uncooperative and have recourse to a reasonable degree of compulsion. They did not even bother to find out whether he had any intention of not respecting the Emperor's command! 9 Yet it is their proud boast that they have executed the Emperor's instructions, whereas in reality they have shown flagrant disregard for his wishes by daring to employ vicious slander against Gubazes in the first place and then by taking it upon themselves to do the exact opposite of what had been wisely enjoined upon them. Most abhorrent of all, they precluded all possibility of choice by suppressing the contents of the letter.

6. It is indeed hard to envisage a punishment sufficiently severe to match the enormity of their crimes. To injure another is always immoral and illegal, but it is especially so if the injured party happens to be a friend and one who has often risked his life on behalf of his associates. 2 For who was the man who preferred your friendship to the wealth of the Persians and to all the attractive propositions they made him? Who was the man who set at nought the friendship of Chosroes and who, though the way lay open through defection to immense prosperity and distinction, was happy to remain in a less exalted position and retain his links with you? Who, I ask, was the man who, when his land had long been hard pressed by the Persians and when aid from you was slow in coming, departed suddenly and took to the mountains, living on the very peaks of the Caucasus and putting up with inhuman conditions rather than accept the friendly overtures the enemy were making to him and come down from his mountain fastness to live in ease and comfort in his own home? Who was this man then? 3 None other than Gubazes, the man who was afraid to face no danger on your account (oh the injustice of it!), Gubazes the traitor, the rebel, the man who betrayed the Empire to the Persians! And he, a king, has met his death at the hands of such vile

and loathsome men as John and Rusticus. Yet even if he had really been guilty of the sort of crime he has been accused of, they still ought not to have dispatched him with such indecent haste. He should first have been judged by the Emperor, who is the common sovereign of the Romans and the Colchians with supreme authority over both peoples, before receiving his due share of punishment. 4 But since their murderous act was motivated not by any just cause but by an irrational hostility which erupted under the stimulus of envy into this piece of diabolical wickedness they left no room in their minds for sanity or for considerations of expediency. Venting the spleen of their accumulated hatred at the first opportunity afforded them they put their long-premeditated plan into execution, heedless of the critical state of affairs at the time and regardless of the consequences. 5 In the midst of a conflict of such proportions, when the sensible thing would have been to conciliate and win over even those peoples with whom no contacts had as yet been established, they have done their level best to antagonize even those who until recently were the closest friends of the Romans. Indeed if it depended solely on them we should have gone over to the enemy, we should be plotting against our staunchest friends, our country would be in the hands of the Persians and violent upheaval and civil strife would be combining to sound the death-knell of our ancestral traditions. 6 You must, therefore, inflict a fitting punishment upon them, if indeed such a punishment can be found, just as though all these things really had taken place and you were faced with the collapse of your Empire. For even if we have in fact remained true to the cause of the Romans, it is not right that they should benefit from our virtuous conduct and be any less severely punished than the nature of their criminal endeavour demands".

7. While the prosecutors were thus pressing their charges the Colchian populace who were assembled there could not understand the terms in which the accusation was couched or appreciate the rhetorical skill employed. Nevertheless being acquainted with the facts upon which each individual count rested, they enthusiastically supported the efforts of the prosecution by echoing their intonation and imitating their gestures. In a like manner their mood kept changing from compassion to resolute and confident assertion according as they thought they detected a change of tone in the voices of the accusers. 2 Then when the speech for the prosecution had drawn to a close and the judge paused a while to deliberate they were filled with silent indignation because the accused had not been executed on the spot. And when the judge motioned the defendants to state their case the assembled multitude were ready to raise an outcry and were already murmuring and their voices were becoming clearer and more audible. At this point, however, the accusers prevented things from getting out of hand by beckoning to them to hold their peace. 3 Accordingly when silence had

been procured Rusticus together with his brother John came forward into their midst and addressed them in the following terms:

4 "Fortune has given a sudden and unexpected twist to events, with the result that when we should be receiving the greatest rewards we find ourselves on trial for our lives. Yet we contemplate this ordeal with joy and with the 5 conviction that it will redound to our credit, since whatever its outcome it cannot fail to make it still more abundantly clear to all that by our own unaided efforts we have brought about the downfall of a traitor and a rebel and upheld the interests of the Emperor. And so even in the event of our being put to death we would freely accept and welcome as though it were the object of our desire the anguish which is forced upon us. And we shall depart from this life comforted and fortified for our journey into the hereafter by the conscious certainty that we have left the Romans still in full possession of their Colchian dominions and not yet having forfeited them to any foreign power.

6 If we were standing trial in a Persian court in the presence of Persian judges it would behove us to deny most strenuously that we ever did do what in fact we did. We would be in fear and trembling lest our assertions be refuted and, if they were, it is quite conceivable that we should be at a loss how to plead our cause before bitterly hostile judges who were incensed at the failure of their hopes which our actions had brought about. 7 But since it is a Roman who is presiding over the court what possible grounds could we have for denying what we have done? What need is there for us to justify to you our action when as a result of it we have done you the signal service of destroying the rebel Gubazes? I say 'rebel' because he does not deserve to be accorded the august title of 'king'. His deeds have shown him to be the negation all that such a title stands for, though our accusers are raising an indignant outcry at what they describe as the outrageous murder of a king. 8 This name, however, should not be applied to the outward trappings of royalty — the jewelled clasp and fancy robe, but to the man who is the active embodiment of justice, whose desires do not cause him to disregard the call of duty and whose aspirations are kept within their proper bounds. If that was the sort of man we killed then we have committed a heinous crime, the case of the prosecution is a just one and the Colchians have every reason to describe us as brutal and vicious murderers. 9 But if the real Gubazes was the complete antithesis of this, if he was prepared to stop at nothing in his efforts to harm us by secretly letting in the Persians and betraying his country to them, can there really be any question as to whether we ought not to have nipped the potential menace in the bud by our timely intervention rather than allow our deference to the crown to make us play into the hands of the enemy? 10 If, however, anybody receives prior intelligence of some threatening move being contemplated in

some particular quarter and has it in his power to frustrate the design immediately and having averted the crisis to proceed to take deliberate and concerted action to cope with any possible emergency, it would in such a case be the height of cruelty on his part to resort to punitive measures in advance instead of defending himself by ensuring the possibility of foiling any hostile attempt should the occasion arise. 11 But when one is faced with a fait accompli against which all remedies are of no avail, when the state is threatened with imminent destruction and the situation seems to preclude even the faintest ray of hope then swift and decisive action is the only sane policy and every effort must be made to avoid suffering some irreparable harm.

8. Now our accusers may cry shame, infamy and murder until they burst. They may seize upon such expletives in order to cast the whole affair in a lurid and melodramatic light and try to force you to consider only the deed itself. But it is for you in your judicial capacity to take into account the circumstances that led up to it, to weigh up the causes that impelled us to take action and from the rightness of the undertaking to establish the honesty of our intentions. 2 We do in fact often see in the various towns and cities vagrants, thieves and other types of criminal beheaded or with their feet cut off, and we do not cry shame on the spectacle, inhuman though it may appear to be, nor do we vent our indignation on the authorities concerned with administering these punishments by calling them savage brutes and cruel fiends. No, when we consider the crimes the felons in question have committed and bear in mind that that is why they are being punished we rejoice in the harshness of the punishment, since it has not been devised without good reason, as witness the unabated persistence of criminal activity.

3 Gubazes therefore has been slain by us. And what, might we ask, is so dreadful about slaying a man who is a traitor and an enemy? Our accusers, moreover, have defined the term enemy. They say that it should be applied not to the man who is separated from us by a great distance but to whoever, even if he is a fellow countryman, seeks to curry favour with the enemy. We too consider this to be the best, most accurate and most realistic view of the matter. 4 Given such a measure of agreement on both sides then, let us set out to prove by this mutually acceptable criterion that Gubazes was indeed an enemy, for once this has been demonstrated it will become immediately apparent that his killing was fully justified.

5 Now all barbarian peoples are by nature so constituted that even when they are subjects of the Romans they are far removed in spirit from them and, chafing at the imposition of the rule of law, they incline instinctively to turbulent and seditious behaviour. There is nothing they would like better than to continue living as their own masters, subject to no outside jurisdiction and a law unto themselves. And if it is not possible for them to do

so then they strive to attach themselves to those nations with whom they have most in common. 6 But Gubazes, in addition to being tarred with the same brush since he was himself a barbarian by birth and consequently tainted with the innate treachery of his race, surpassed himself in his wickedness towards us. He no longer deemed it necessary to hide his feelings, but hastened to put into effect what had hitherto been the secret aspirations of a hostile mind. 7 While we were toiling away and facing every kind of danger in our efforts to frustrate the enemy's plans he saw fit to stay at home with his fellow countrymen and absent himself from the struggle. But at the same time he kept a watchful eye on which way the fighting was going. 8 If the Romans achieved some resounding success over the enemy his immediate reaction was a display of hostility and spite in which he would seek by mockery to destroy the impression created by our achievements. He would dismiss the whole undertaking as a trifling incident and its outcome as insignificant and attributable not to ourselves but to the vagaries of fortune. 9 But if by chance we met with some reverse (and it is not humanly possible to escape such ups and downs) he would set himself up as a critical interpreter of events and immediately exempt fortune from any blame or any part in what had happened. He had already decided in advance that the sole cause for any reverse we experienced was a combination of poor morale, physical incapacity and unintelligent planning. 10 He would never, as he did when abusing us, seek to explain away the successes achieved by the enemy at our expense simply by making some disparaging reference to the fickle, irregular and irrational behaviour of fortune.

9. He proclaimed these sentiments openly and made them known not only to the Persian forces for whose benefit he was actively intriguing but messengers were at once despatched by him and carried the news to Iberia, to the Alans, the Suanians, to the barbarians beyond the Caucasus, to more distant and still more distant peoples. Indeed if they could have travelled to the ends of the earth for him he would not have declined to send them. His message was: "The Romans are cowards in war and are being beaten by the barbarians." 2 Now his purpose in eagerly pursuing this policy was not just to bring the Roman people into disrepute, though that would of itself be a sufficiently damning proof of his hostile attitude. His efforts were in fact directed to a different and more sinister objective. 3 His intention was to undermine as best he could the widespread belief among foreign peoples concerning the triumphant and invincible might of the Emperor and in this way to incite to some rash act of defiance those peoples who had hitherto been overawed and abjectly subservient. 4 How then, in all fairness, are we to describe the perpetrator of these acts? Surely as an enemy rather than as a friend and a well-wisher, an ally and a king or any other of the fancy titles the prosecution has applied to the rebel Gubazes. Yet both prosecution

and defence have conceded that the only way one can tell a friend from an enemy is by the manner in which he reacts to events. 5 Since, therefore, it has now been demonstrated that Gubazes was distressed at our successes and elated at our failures, what earthly reason can barbarians have for inveighing against the laws of the Romans according to which we are in the habit of punishing or even executing, should the occasion arise, those who engage in riotous and subversive activities. 6 But let us, if you like, set aside all proofs, inferences and deductions and, concentrating our attention exclusively on the hard facts of the case, see to what conclusions such a consideration leads us. The fort of Onoguris had been wrested from the territory of Archaeopolis and was in Persian hands. The presence of an enemy army firmly entrenched within our borders was an unbearable affront. The strategy which found favour with the generals was to launch a full-scale attack on the enemy and destroy or at least drive out what had long constituted a thorn in the flesh and a permanent menace.

7 We desperately needed the help of a Colchian force, not only in order that we, with our poor understanding of local geography, might have the benefit of their first-hand knowledge of the terrain but also in order that we might enlist their active support and cooperation in the struggle against heavily-armed troops drawn up behind fortifications and also in all probability against a relief-force from Mucheirisis. 8 What then were the generals to do in these circumstances? Surely the proper thing for them to do was to ask the leader of the Colchians for assistance and to draw his attention to the fairness of their request. And that is precisely what they did. 9 He, however, acting in a truly lordly and tyrannical fashion would not even hear of putting in an appearance let alone of actively participating in the assault on the fortress. He did not even bother to mask his refusal with some semblance of an excuse. Indeed he rejected our request out of hand with an air of arrogant self-importance which ill became a subject who was paid for his services. Moreover he persisted in angrily heaping insults on the heads of the generals, as though he imagined such behaviour to be courageous and in keeping with the status of a king. Clearly he no longer meant to defer the open and shameless advocacy of his earlier designs. 10 Was there then any point in waiting for further proof and displaying the Emperor's letter with the idea that the man who was not prepared to travel even a short distance in his own country would come to Constantinople? And how would it have been possible, if we had proposed to send him there, when he had already stirred up so much hostility against us, to avoid widespread dissension and bloodshed and open defection and the imminent prospect of a Persian invasion, since we would have had to contend with the stubborn and relentless opposition of a public enemy[1] whilst the people as

[1] i. e. Gubazes.

a whole would, like the barbarians they are, readily have accepted this opportunity for indulging in revolutionary violence? A further incentive would of course have been provided by the fact that Persian help would have been forthcoming from very near at hand. 11 And so, when disaster was practically staring us in the face, we made away with the ringleader and by doing this suppressed the conspiracy with such ease and promptness that it now seems scarcely credible that any threat ever existed.

10. Our accusers would do well, therefore, to stop bringing up the matter of the letter and abusing us for not having followed its instructions. Is there anyone to whom it is not perfectly obvious that what was written about his having to go to Constantinople was there merely to test his intentions and to find out whether he was willing to cooperate and do as he was told? 2 Now, having easily formed a clear idea of his unruly and aggressive frame of mind from his rejection of a smaller request, how could we have been expected to bid him comply with a demand of a more serious nature instead of having recourse to more direct action which, after exposing ourselves to numerous hazards, we would in the end in any case have had to take? Those who, when the time is ripe for action, fail to make an appropriate and decisive response to the situation cannot at a later date recover the lost opportunity. 3 But apparently, to judge from what our accusers have to say, we could still in the last resort have brought an action against Gubazes, engaged that is to say in a futile battle of words and chosen the niceties of verbal altercation in preference to the realities of security. But the presence of the Persians did not allow such a procedure since they were closing in and ready to take over the whole of Lazica with the help of this scheming traitor. 4 Moreover now that the hostility, treachery and rebellious aspirations of Gubazes have been revealed on all sides what difference do the Colchians suppose it makes to them whether he was killed by us or by somebody else?

5 The desire to render loyal service is not the exclusive privilege of generals and other similarly exalted personages. Everyone who feels so inclined has both a right and a duty to show concern for the state of which he is a subject and to exert himself to the utmost to promote the common good. 6 Likewise even if to their mind we are the scum of the earth, yet we are loyal and devoted subjects of the Emperor, we do have the interests of the Romans at heart, and we are not the sort of men to acquiesce in any attempt at conspiracy. In conclusion, if we must add one further point it is this: you may rest assured that ours was an honourable, a just and a timely intervention and that it was made with the full support of Martin".

11. So this speech too drew to a close. Athanasius had at the outset accorded an equally attentive reception to the words of Rusticus. But when

once both contending parties had had their say he proceeded to subject everything to a searching and rigorous examination. His finding was that there was no evidence of treasonable or seditious activity on the part of Gubazes and that his murder was unjust and absolutely illegal. The refusal to take part in the expedition against Onoguris had been the result not of pro-Persian feelings but of anger at the conduct of the generals in losing possession of the stronghold through their indolence, complacency and carelessness. After he had come to this conclusion he decided to refer the matter of Martin's alleged complicity to the Emperor. 2 With regard to those who openly admitted to the killing he gave a written verdict to the effect that they were to be executed forthwith and that the manner of death was to be by beheading.

3 The condemned men were seated on mules and paraded through the streets, thereby providing the Colchians with a sobering and awe-inspiring spectacle. These latter were further impressed by the herald proclaiming in a loud clear voice a general exhortation to respect the laws and refrain from committing murder. 4 But when their heads had been cut off too, everyone was moved to pity and forgot his resentment. This then was the finish of the trial. The Colchians for their part retained and renewed their old affection for the Romans.

12. After these events the Roman legions wintered in the towns and fortresses assigned to them.[2] 2 Meanwhile some of the most influential men among the Misimians came to Nachoragan in Iberia and gave him a full account of the way they had dared to deal with Soterichus. But they kept secret their real motives and presented the Persian general with their own version of the facts, according to which they had long been deliberately inclined to favour the cause of Persia and had in consequence met with abuse and opprobrium from the Colchians themselves as well as from the Romans. Finally Soterichus had descended upon them. Ostensibly he was there to distribute gold to the allies but his real purpose was the destruction of the entire nation. 3 "And so" explained the Misimian deputation, "faced with the option of annihilation or of striking the first blow and, though perhaps incurring the censure of some for the hastiness of our action, of living our own lives and managing our affairs to suit our own interests, we chose the better and more natural alternative. We put our own survival first and were not particularly worried by the prospect of becoming targets for abuse and recrimination. 4 We killed Soterichus and his associates in order to punish them for their wickedness and to enhance the circumstances of our defection by offering the Persians a firm pledge of our loyalty and goodwill. 5 On this score and particularly on account of our pro-Persian policy the Romans will not be slow to vent their anger. Very soon they will

[2] Winter of 556—7 A. D.

be upon us and, if they can, they will exterminate us. It is only right then that you should receive us in a spirit of friendship and extend you protection to us. And, considering our land henceforth as your own and our people as your subjects, it behoves you equally not to disregard the plight of a people on the brink of destruction, a people that is neither small nor insignificant, a people capable of making a very substantial contribution to the welfare of the Persian Empire. 6 You will also find that we have considerable experience of warfare and that we make powerful allies in battle. Our land, which is situated in a more elevated position than Lazica, will provide you with a secure base for operations against the enemy". 7 When Nachoragan heard this he received them most cordially, applauded their decision to change sides and told them they could leave with the confident expectation of obtaining from Persia all the help they needed. And so the Misimian deputation returned home with a detailed report of what had happened. A wave of optimism spread through the whole people at the news.

13. At the beginning of spring the Roman generals held a meeting at which they decided to march against the Misimians. 2 Buzes and Justin however, were instructed to stay on at Nesos in order to protect the place and generally keep an eye on things. The expedition consisted of a mixed force of cavalry and infantry numbering about four thousand. Among its most distinguished members were Maxentius and Theodorus the leader of the Tzanian contingent whom I have frequently had occasion to mention, both of them active and warlike commanders. 3 And so they set off on their way. The arrangement was that Martin would soon arrive to take charge of them. However, to prevent them from being leaderless for even a short time while marching through the subject territories an Armenian called Barazes and a Colchian called Pharsantes received the supreme command. Neither was superior in military prowess or in rank to the rest of the soldiers, indeed they were inferior to some. 4 Barazes was only a non-commissioned officer whereas the other was captain of the palace guard of the Lazian king, and so lacked the necessary confidence and force of personality to give orders freely to a Roman army.

5 Now summer was already advanced when this army reached the territory of the Apsilians. Further progress was prevented by a strong concentration of Persian forces assembled there. The Persians in fact had realized that the Romans were preparing to march against the Misimians so, leaving Iberia and the forts in the neighbourhood of Mucheirisis, they too set out for the country of the Misimians with the object of occupying it in advance of the Romans and protecting it as effectively as possible. 6 The Romans therefore stayed on in the fortresses of the Apsilians and tried to play for time and delay the issue until the end of the summer season, since it seemed a futile and extremely hazardous procedure to take on both the Persians and

the Misimians at the same time. Accordingly both armies remained inactive with neither side venturing forth any distance and each one waiting for the other to make the first move.

7 A mercenary force of Sabir Huns was serving with the Persians. The Sabirs are a huge and populous nation. They are also extremely warlike and rapacious. They are always eager to raid strange lands and the lure of pay and the hope of plunder are sufficient incentive for them to fight now for one people, now for another, changing sides with bewildering rapidity. 8 They have often helped the Romans against the Persians and vice versa, changing sides and paymasters in a very short space of time. They had in fact fought on our side in the previous engagement with the Persians and on that occasion killed (in the course of the night-battle which I have already described in detail) many of the Dilimnites who had come to attack them. 9 At the end of that campaign they were discharged by the Romans after they had received the amount of pay agreed upon. Whereupon they offered their services to the very people whom they had but recently been fighting. The men who did this may perhaps have been different Sabirs, but Sabirs they were all the same and they had been sent by their own people to fight in the Persian army.

14. Now about five hundred of these Sabirs were bivouacking in an enclosure far away from the rest of the troops. When Maxentius and Theodorus ascertained this and discovered moreover that they were living in an irregular and completely undisciplined fashion and not even taking the precaution of carrying their weapons around with them, they immediately rode out against them with three hundred horse. 2 Surrounding the wall (which was so low that if a man on horseback stood over it from the outside his face would show over the top) they let fly at the barbarians with javelins, stones, arrows and anything that came to hand. 3 The Sabirs, thinking their attackers to be more numerous than they really were and taken completely unawares, had no idea how to defend themselves and no possibility of escape because they were hemmed in by the walls of the enclosure. They were all mown down except for forty men who managed unaccountably to climb over the walls without attracting attention and then slip away and hide themselves in the undergrowth of the nearby wood. But the Romans tried to track down even these. 4 As soon as the Persians received news of what had happened they sent out a cavalry force of about two thousand men to deal with the Romans. The latter, however, satisfied with what they had achieved, yielded to superior numbers and retreated at a gallop. Soon they were safely back in camp, jubilant at their success, which was marred only by what had 5 happened to Maxentius who was badly wounded by one of the barbarians that had slipped into the wood. He was carried on a litter and almost miraculously conveyed to safety. As soon as he had been wounded

his bodyguard lifted him up and beat a hasty retreat with him before the whole enemy-force was upon them. Then when the Persians caught up and were bearing down on them the rest of the Romans fled in a different direction and acted as a decoy to draw the pursuers away. In this way they provided a breathing-space which enabled Maxentius to be carried with less haste inside the fort.

15. Meanwhile Justin the son of Germanus sent one of his commanders, a Hun called Elminzur, from Nesos to Rhodopolis with two thousand horse. Rhodopolis is a city in Lazica but it was in Persian hands at the time. Mermeroes had in fact captured it much earlier on and placed a Persian garrison in it. However, I shall not go into the details of how this happened since it has already been clearly described by Procopius. 2 At any rate when Elminzur got there he was aided by a singular stroke of good luck. It so happened that the Persian garrison was outside of the town and its inhabitants were scattered about in various places. 3 Consequently Elminzur marched into the city and gained possession of it without meeting with any resistance. He also conducted a foray into the neighbouring region and destroyed any Persian detachments he found there. Realizing that the local people had supported the Persians through fear of an external foe rather than through treachery he allowed them to stay in their homes and resume their normal way of life after having taken hostages from them to ensure their allegiance and made all necessary arrangements for the maintenance of security. And so Rhodopolis returned to its former status, keeping its hallowed traditions and remaining subject to the Emperor of the Romans. 4 In the course of this summer no other memorable event occurred. At the first onset of winter the Persians withdrew to Cotaïs and Iberia with the idea of wintering there and left the Misimians to fend for themselves. It is in fact not customary for the Persians to engage in strenuous campaigning abroad at that time of year. 5 The Romans, now free of enemy surveillance, started once more to head for their previous destination. When they reached the fort called Tibeleos which marks the boundary between the land of the Misimians and that of the Apsilians Martin arrived to take charge of the whole army. But he was suddenly assailed by a serious illness which prevented him from doing so, eager though he was. So he stayed on there with the intention of returning shortly to the towns and forts of Lazica. The troops, however, pressed on regardless, placing themselves once more under the leadership of their previous commanders.

6 First of all they decided to test the temper of the Misimians to see whether they would mend their ways of their own accord and recognize their lawful masters. They might, it was hoped, so far repent of the crimes they had committed on that occasion as to give themselves up to the Romans and return the money they had taken from Soterichus. 7 Accordingly the

Romans selected prominent men from among the Apsilians and sent them as envoys to announce these terms. But the Misimians, these abandoned wretches for whom no derogatory epithet is too strong, far from relaxing their savagery and atoning by their future conduct for their past misdeeds, spurned and trampled underfoot the most basic rules of ordinary human behaviour. They fell upon the envoys and slew them even though they were Apsilians, people, that is to say, with a similar way of life and whose territory bordered on their own and in spite of the fact that they had had no hand in the actions of which the Misimians accused Soterichus and the Romans, but had merely offered them some friendly and helpful advice and had done so with the utmost courtesy.

16. And so the Misimians having started off by committing an act of criminal folly persisted in their evil ways and had even proceeded to add insult to injury. Indeed, when they discovered that the Persians had decamped and were not going to protect them as they had agreed they still felt sufficiently sure of themselves, relying on the inaccessibility of the terrain which they were confident would present an insurmountable obstacle to the Romans, to commit even more heinous crimes. 2 Their territory is in fact screened by a mountain which though not particularly high is extremely steep and rocky on all sides. A glimpse may be caught here and there of a small pathway scarcely trodden and running through the middle of the hill. It is so cramped and narrow that it does not afford an easy passage even to a single wayfarer walking in comparative security, so that, if someone were to stand on the summit and prevent people from approaching, no enemy no matter how numerous could get through, not even if he were as lightly-armed as they say the Isaurians are. Relying therefore on this impregnable position, they had become utterly reckless.

3 When the Romans received the news of the atrocity they were filled with anger at what had happened. Through the dilatoriness of the barbarians, who had not placed a guard on the hill, the Romans were able to occupy the summit in advance and cross over without hindrance to the open plains where cavalry can manoeuvre without difficulty. 4 When the Misimians found that they had miscalculated they burnt as superfluous most of their strongholds since they could not possibly man them all and the entire population assembled in the one which they considered to be best fortified. This fortress has from ancient times been called Tzacher but it is also called Siderun[3] because of its massive and impregnable aspect.

5 A small group of Romans numbering not more than forty cavalrymen (they were not common soldiers but high-ranking officers) were riding some distance away from the main body when they were attacked by a mixed cavalry and infantry force of about six hundred Misimians whose idea it

[3] i. e. "Place of Iron"

was to close in on the Romans and, outnumbering them as they did, make short work of them. 6 But the Romans used their experience of warfare to considerable effect by quickly gaining a hillock from which they performed great feats of arms. It was a hard, prolonged and hotly-contested struggle with the Misimians trying to complete the encirclement of the Romans and the Romans at one moment suddenly swooping down on the enemy and throwing their ranks into complete disarray and the next galloping back up the hill to safety. 7 Meanwhile the barbarians caught sight of the rest of the army making its way over the brow of a hill and, thinking that they had been lured into an ambush, immediately took to flight. But the Romans, who had all joined forces by this time, pursued them relentlessly until they had killed the bulk of them. Out of so many men a mere eighty returned safely to the fortress of Siderun. 8 If the Romans had attacked the fort there and then while the barbarians were still stunned by what had happened, they would, I think, almost certainly have swept everything before them and the war would have been over on that same day. 9 But in the absence of any general of note and of any outstanding and authoritative personality everyone was practically on terms of equality. The result was mutual recrimination and mutual exhortation, with each man having ears only for his own suggestions, and nothing worthwhile was accomplished. 10 The fact that opinion was divided, so that one view found favour with one group whilst some other view appealed to the opposing faction, meant that neither policy was put into practice. Resentful that his own point of view did not win general acceptance each man went about his business in a negligent and half-hearted fashion and took pleasure rather in any reverses which might furnish him later with the opportunity of boasting to the next man and of not mincing his words as he pointed out that the sole cause of the unfortunate event had been their failure to implement his suggestions.

17. In these circumstances, then, they camped at a greater distance from the enemy than is normal when one is conducting a siege. Furthermore they did not even launch their attack at dawn as they should have done but, yielding to cowardice and sloth, they began to attach a secondary importance to the things that mattered most with the result that they attacked the enemy too late and returned to camp too early.

2 When Martin realized what was happening he dispatched with all speed to take over the supreme command a man who though a Cappadocian by birth had long been honoured with the rank of general. His name was John but he was also known as Dacnas. 3 He had been sent quite recently by the Emperor to Lazica and his duties were the same as those of Rusticus had been, namely to keep the Emperor accurately informed of all that was going on and to distribute the Imperial Largesse to those soldiers who distinguished themselves in the field. 4 On reaching the territory of the

Misimians and taking charge of the Roman army, John immediately moved up all his forces around the fort and tried to lay siege to it. He also endeavoured to harass and attack those who were living outside the fort. Most of the dwellings were not in fact inside the fortified enclosure but were perched on the top of a nearby rock, which was flanked by deep gorges and steep boulders stretching over a great area and rendering the whole place well-nigh inaccessible to strangers unfamiliar with the region. 5 Their experience of the terrain enabled the local people, when necessary, to descend, albeit slowly and painfully, by means of a narrow path completely hidden from view and then to climb back up again. At the foot of the rock on the plain proper are springs of drinking water from which the inhabitants of the hill draw their water. 6 At that time however, the Romans were patrolling the area and so the barbarians came down at night to draw their water. But when a certain Isaurian called Illus, who was on sentry duty there caught sight of a large number of Misimians coming down at a very late hour of the night for water he concealed himself and waited silently, making no attempt to stop them. When they had filled their pitchers and set off he followed them secretly and went up with them as far as the top, where he observed the lie of the land as best he could in the dark and noticed that not more than eight men had been posted to mount guard and keep a watch on the ascent. 7 As soon as he discovered this he descended and gave full details to the general, who was delighted at the news and on the following night carefully selected a hundred shock-troops and sent them out to reconnoitre the place and, if possible, launch an attack. They also had instructions that once they were all firmly on top they were to give a signal with the trumpet and the rest of the army would then attack the fort so that the enemy in both places would be thrown into confusion.

18. Since he had already had some experience of the ascent Illus went in front and led the way. Immediately after him came Marcellinus' personal guard Ziper followed by Leontius the son of Dabragezas [4] who was followed in turn by Theodorus the commander of the Tzani, and so on one after the other in one continuous line. 2 When they had already got more than half way up those who were in front saw clearly the watch-fire burning and the guards lying down next to it. Seven of them were fast asleep and were snoring peacefully. Only one, who had propped himself up on his elbow seemed to have managed to stay awake, and even he was drowsy and overcome with sleep, so that he kept dropping off and starting up again and there was no telling how much longer he would hold out. 3 Meanwhile Leontius the son of Dabragezas slipped on some mud, lost his footing and

[4] "or the personal guard of Dabragezas" The Greek is at first sight ambiguous, but it seems more likely that a barbarian commander should have given his son a Greek name than that someone with a Greek name should have been acting as his attendant.

fell, breaking his shield in the process. Naturally this produced a tremendous clatter at which the guards started up in alarm and sitting up on their couches drew their swords and looked about them craning their necks in every direction. But they could not make out what had happened since they were dazzled by the glare of the fire and therefore unable to detect the presence of men standing in the darkness. Furthermore, the noise, having assailed them in their sleep, was neither clear nor distinct nor such as to suggest the sound of falling weapons.

The Romans on the other hand had a clear and accurate view of everything. 4 Consequently they halted and remained immovable as though rooted to the ground. They did not utter so much as a whisper or move their feet, but stood stock still exactly where they were, whether they happened to be standing on a sharp piece of rock or a bush as the case may be. 5 If they had not acted in this way and the guards had got wind of what was going on they would no doubt have rolled down some huge boulder and crushed all their assailants, which was why they stood with bated breath silent and motionless. 6 I must say I marvel at their discipline, how in a split second as though by some preconcerted signal they all realized what was best for them and kept firmly in position, working out independently what the urgency of the moment did not permit them to say aloud. Since there seemed to be no indication of danger the barbarians followed their feelings and were only too glad to go back to sleep.

19. Whereupon the Romans fell upon them while they were still sleeping soundly and slew them all including the one whom one might jestingly describe as "half-awake". After that they advanced boldly, spreading out through the alleys between the houses. At the same time the trumpet sounded the signal for battle. 2 The Misimians were surprised and bewildered by the noise, and though they did not grasp its implications they got up and rushed out in all directions, seeking one another's company. 3 But the Romans met them in the doorways and gave them a warm reception with their swords, slaughtering them in great numbers. No sooner in fact had the first batch crossed the threshold and been cut down than a second batch was there and yet a third one was already on the way to involuntary self-immolation and there was no respite in the general rush to destruction. Soon crowds of women got up and came streaming out of the houses crying and sobbing. But the Romans in their fury did not spare even these, so that they too reaped the reward of their menfolk's treachery. 4 One of them, a woman of some refinement, was walking very conspicuously holding a lighted torch when she was pierced through the belly by a spear and perished miserably. At this point one of the Romans picked up the torch and began to set fire to the huts, which, being built of wood and straw, burst into flames in a moment. The flames rose up like a beacon and flashed the news of what

was happening even to the Apsilians and to peoples still further away. 5 The ensuing slaughter was still more terrible and the barbarians were dying like flies. Those who stayed indoors were either burnt to death or buried alive. Those who rushed outside met with more certain death from the swords of the Romans. Many children were seized sobbing and crying out for their mothers. Some they hurled down and mangled brutally against the rocks. Others they tossed in the air, as though they were playing some sort of game, and caught them on the points of their spears. 6 Now it was understandable that the Romans should have been enraged with the Misimian people both on account of Soterichus and of the outrage against the envoys. Nevertheless their fury was disproportionate and they should not have acted with such wanton and monstrous brutality towards newborn babies who had no understanding of their parents' crimes. And so this sinful deed of theirs did not go unpunished.

20. The whole night had been spent in the commission of these and similar atrocities and the spot had already assumed an aspect of complete devastation when about five hundred heavily-armed Misimians sallied forth from the fortress at the first light of dawn and attacked the Romans. The latter were caught off their guard because they thought they had overcome all resistance. All were driven headlong into flight by the Misimians and most of them were either killed or wounded. 2 After a confused and precipitous descent the survivors returned to camp a mass of wounds. They had been struck by the enemy's spears and their legs were badly torn through frequent tumbles against the rocks. 3 And so, since they had no inclination for another climb up that rock, they decided to attack the fort at its most vulnerable point and at the same time to fill in the moat. Assembling therefore a number of sheds and penthouses they brought them up and proceeded to attack the wall from a safe position. They employed siege-engines, bows and arrows and every other available means of making life difficult for the defenders. 4 The barbarians were in dire straits but they still put up a stiff resistance. Some of them brought up a wicker-roof and advanced against the Roman siege-works with the idea of demolishing them. But before they drew near and took cover under it a Slav called Suarunas hurled his spear at the one that was most visible and struck him a mortal blow. As the man fell the wicker-roof toppled over revealing and leaving unprotected the men inside it. 5 The Romans had no difficulty in shooting them all down except for one man who managed to get away, had almost made it to the fort and had already reached the small side-gate when he was struck dead by an arrow. He fell sprawling on the threshold with a small part of his body protruding outside of the fort but most of it inside. 6 When the Misimians saw this I think they interpreted it as a bad omen. Apart from that they were beginning to break down under the strain of the fighting and were anxious to

effect a reconciliation with the Romans, and above all they were influenced by the fact that the relief-force promised by the Persians had not arrived. 7 In consideration, then, of all these factors and after having taken stock of their own capabilities they were reluctantly brought round to the belated realization that they were going to be no match for the Romans and that they could no longer sustain the fighting. They sent envoys, therefore, to John imploring him not to wipe out a people that had long been subject to the Romans, that shared the same religious beliefs and that had not retaliated until they had been grievously wronged and had then behaved with the characteristic recklessness of barbarians. Their case was after all one which merited some degree of forgiveness and restraint considering that they had already suffered so much and had been punished with such severity. Everything within a considerable radius of the fort had been razed to the ground, not less than five thousand of their young men had perished and many more of their women while the number of children that had lost their lives was even greater, so that the entire nation had come close to extinction.

8 John was only too glad to accept their petition both to avoid the necessity of exposing himself and his troops to the hazards of a prolonged stay in a desolate and wintry region and because the Misimians had in truth been sufficiently punished for their misdeeds. 9 Accordingly he took hostages with him and all the money and everything else that Soterichus had brought with him including the Emperor's gold ammounting to twenty-eight thousand eight hundred solid gold pieces. In addition to this he set off with a large quantity of booty, telling the Misimians to conduct their own affairs once more and to resume normal life without fear of molestation. 10 And so he returned to Lazica having brought back an army which had covered itself with glory and had done so with a total loss of only thirty men.

21. After these events the Emperor Justinian relieved Martin altogether of his command and put in his place Justin the son of Germanus as Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Lazica and Armenia. Even before this the Emperor had not liked the idea of Martin's holding the supreme command in view of the prominent part he had played in the assassination of Gubazes. 2 However he had kept his views secret for a time because he felt it was not a good thing to change or tamper with the leadership of the army while affairs were still in a state of turmoil, particularly since Martin was popular with the troops on account of his military experience and able generalship. 3 It was this, I think, that had saved him his life, otherwise he too would have been executed along with John and Rusticus. Instead of which the Emperor out of respect for his victories and for his ability in the field, bent the strict letter of the law and dropped the charge against him. He did not however, allow him to retain his command but reduced him to the status of a private individual, judging that even though he had had a hand in a

crime of such enormity the disgrace of his dismissal was sufficient punishment. 4 So, as soon as there was a lull in hostilities on the Persian front he deposed him and summoned to Constantinople Justin who apart from being a close relation of the Emperor's enjoyed particularly high repute at the time. Justinian therefore gave him full command and sent him to Lazica to deal with whatever situation might arise there. 5 Now there was in Justin's retinue a Libyan called John, a man who had been obscure and penniless to start with (so much so that in order to live he had had to work as another man's hired lackey and to fetch and carry for some member of Justin's body-guard) but who had subsequently risen in a short time to great heights of wealth and arrogance. 6 With the help of much scheming and a great deal of low cunning he soon succeeded in making himself known to Justin. Being an utterly vile and unscrupulous wretch who in order to make money would stoop to every conceivable form of wickedness and dishonesty, he asked the general for a stated sum of money. In return for this he promised that he would not only furnish the general with supplies for whatever length of time he chose but would also undertake to feed all his slaves and menials, his bodyguard and in fact his entire retinue. 7 He went even further: he guaranteed not only to keep safe the full amount he received and to return it intact and untouched as though it had been lent to him but even to add a bonus to it. Most people thought that what he said was just a piece of boastful rigmarole. But Justin though he should have been indignant at the Libyan's nonsensical proposal, knowing full well that he could not make good his promise without resorting to violence and extortion and ruining through his illegal transactions everyone with whom he came into contact, accepted his offer, entrusted him with the money as stipulated and gave him carte blanche to do as he pleased.

22. Thereupon John went the rounds of the various villages of the Empire situated along the route of their line of march. He would gather together the inhabitants of a village where for instance oxen were in short supply and would issue a general proclamation to the effect that the army had need of them. And so he would say, displaying twenty talents, "You must sell me oxen to the value of this sum and there can be no question of selling me less. But first take the money and then see to it that you bring me all your oxen as quickly as possible". 2 When they begged him to exempt them, vowing and declaring that they did not even have enough to plough the fields with, the villain would refuse with the utmost arrogance and assume an outraged air at the idea of the general not being allowed even to buy provisions. And he would fly into a rage and keep angrily insisting until they got together as much money as they could from the sale of their most valuable possessions and presented it to the blackguard in order to purchase immunity from his exactions. 3 Having left the place, then, he

would arrive somewhere else, where nobody had even heard of camels or mules, and would start shouting and insisting that he had come expressly for these animals. It was the same old story all over again. He would begin by showing them his money, end by taking theirs and finally depart. 4 And so wherever he went he followed the same procedure of requiring whatever was not available. In this way he kept amassing money, which he extracted from people who owed him nothing, without ever buying or selling or otherwise financing anything and it was no time before he had already doubled the principal with his takings. 5 When they reached Lazica he did the same thing and moreover, having somehow got hold of some merchant ships, made a forcible collection of the agricultural produce of the region which he bought dirt cheap in huge quantities and shipped away for sale overseas. Not surprisingly the army was in consequence afflicted with such a severe shortage of essential foodstuffs that even a blade of grass cost money, and the profits that that swindling huckster made were absolutely enormous. 6 By these means he fulfilled his agreement with Justin, providing him with food and adding to the original sum of money. Although Justin was well aware of what was going on, since he was constantly being approached by the victims of John's depredations who would throw themselves at his feet, begging with tears and lamentations to be granted a respite from their miseries, he nevertheless ate without fear or compunction the proceeds of injustice and oppression, delighted at the opportunity of enjoying sumptuous fare and not having to pay for it and of lining his pockets into the bargain. 7 But he was destined eventually to pay a heavy penalty.[5] Even though he subsequently performed great feats and won great glory for himself by beating off the attacks of the barbarians on the banks of the Danube, Divine Justice was not mollified nor did his achievements blot out the memory of his crimes. Even though they were hushed up their record remained indelibly preserved until the proper time. 8 For it is not at the moment of sinning that we have our punishment meted out to us but for the most part after some time has elapsed and perhaps when we have forgotten all about our past conduct. And then our immediate reaction is one of distress at the unfair and unreasonable way in which things are going against us. We feel badly done by and perhaps lay the blame on the envy and malice of mankind. But the Power that organizes and regulates our existence knows what is each man's proper due and follows up and searches out in the manner of His own choosing our much earlier transgressions. 9 But the details of Justin's subsequent career and of how his immensely successful life was abruptly and unexpectedly terminated will be accurately reported when the thread of my

[5] Justin was murdered in Alexandria by order of Justin II. According to Evagrius (H. E. 5, 2) the Emperor and his wife Sophia amused themselves by kicking around the wretched man's head.

narrative, as it unwinds in strict chronological sequence through the course of events, reaches that point in time. For the present, however, I must return to the earlier period and resume my account of it.

23. The situation in Lazica was as has been described and Justin had been appointed Commander-in-Chief. The Persians made no move to renew hostilities, nor, for that matter, did the Romans take the offensive. Both sides in fact were on the alert trying their best to divine each other's intentions. Neither side took the initiative in attacking, but both remained inactive, keeping of one accord and, as it were, by common consent, at a respectful distance from each other.

2 On learning what had happened on the banks of the Phasis and that Nachoragan had fled from the scene of battle, the Persian Emperor Chosroes summoned him immediately from Iberia and, following a time-honoured Persian custom, punished him with great savagery. 3 Simply to execute the man was not, he thought, sufficient punishment for his cowardice. Accordingly the skin was torn from his neck, ripped off in one piece right down to his feet, then completely detached from the flesh and turned inside out, so that the contours of the various parts of the body were visible in reverse. After that it was inflated like a wineskin and suspended from a pole, a pitiful and disgusting spectacle of which the infamous Shapur,[6] who had been king of the Persians long before Chosroes, was, I think, the originator. 4 There is a well-known story about Marsyas the Phrygian[7] according to which there was a flute-playing competition between him and Apollo in which Marsyas was roundly beaten and rightly so since he had the temerity (if it does not seem too absurd to put it that way) to play the flute against his own particular god[8]. Whereupon his victorious opponent is supposed to have punished him for this rashness by flaying him and hanging his skin on a tree. The whole tale is, of course, a wildly improbable fabrication of the poets, a mere flight of fancy without a shred of truth or likelihood about it, involving as it does the far-fetched assertion that Apollo became a flute-player, took part in a musical contest and became so violently enraged after his victory that he inflicted such an altogether wicked and insane punishment on his unsuccessful competitor. And is it really conceivable that he could have been ready to have the indictment of his cruelty displayed in mid air? 5 At all events this theme, which is handled by the poets of old, has been taken over and exploited also by modern poets, one of whom Nonnus of Panopolis in Egypt, after having made some mention of Apollo

6 i. e. Shapur I (241—272 A. D.)

7 According to the myth Marsyas was a satyr from Phrygia.

8 i. e. Apollo who in his capacity as god of music is thought of as a sort of patron deity of all flute-players.

(I cannot say in what precise connection because I do not recall the preceding verses) in a poem of his called the Dionysiaca, goes on to say: [9]

"Ever since he humbled Marsyas and his flute
that in contention strove and emulous dispute
against a god. Whereat his skin upon the tallest of the trees
he hung to belly like a sail and flutter in the breeze".

6 That this abomination was at the time still unknown to man should be sufficiently obvious to anyone who is capable of viewing the distant past with the right degree of critical detachment and who does not allow himself to be misled by the tales the poets tell about the gods. 7 However, though Shapur was a most unjust and bloodthirsty man, quickly and easily roused to anger and cruelty and slowly and reluctantly moved to compassion and restraint, even so I cannot definitely exclude the possibility that this foul act might have been perpetrated at an earlier date on some other victim or victims. But, that when he defeated the Roman Emperor Valerian in battle, he captured him alive and took this cruel revenge upon him is vouched for by the testimony of several historians. 8 And from all accounts the very first of those who seized the Persian throne after the collapse of the Parthian empire, namely Ardashir and Shapur were both monsters of wickedness and injustice, seeing that one of them murdered his suzerain and usurped the throne by violent means and that the other set such a dreadful precedent of vindictive cruelty and obscene brutality.

24. Since I have once more had occasion in the course of my narrative to mention Ardashir it would not be inappropriate at this point to fulfil my earlier promise and give an account in chronological order of the monarchs who succeeded him. The parentage of Ardashir and the manner in which he assumed the diadem of the kings of Persia have already been described by me in some detail. I have nothing more to add with regard to him except that he seized the throne of Persia in the manner I described earlier, in the fourth year of the reign of Severus Alexander, [10] five hundred and thirty-eight years after Alexander the Great [11] and that he reigned for fourteen years and ten months. 2 His successor was the infamous Shapur who lived for a total of thirty-one years after his accession, during which time he did untold harm to the Romans. 3 Convinced that once he had slain their Emperor there would be nothing to check his victorious progress he advanced ravaging Mesopotamia and the adjoining region, then Cilicia and Syria, and finally penetrating as far as Cappadocia. The carnage was so terrible that he actually filled in the mountain gorges and ravines with the corpses of the

9 Nonnus: Dionysiaca, I, 42 sq.
10 222—235 A. D.
11 Used loosely by Agathias for "after the beginning of the Seleucid Era (i. e. 312 B. C.), so that the year in question begins 1 Oct. 226 A. D. and ends on 30 Sept. 227 A. D.

slain and levelled the sloping summits of the hills and rode over them, crossing mountain ridges as though they were level plains. 4 On his return journey he was so elated by his impious success that his insolence knew no bounds, but it was soon checked by Odenathos of Palmyra,[12] a man whose previous obscurity and insignificance were more than offset by his glorious exploit against Shapur which won him a lasting place in the pages of history.

5 On the death of Shapur, his son Hormizd succeeded to the throne. His reign was a very short one,[13] lasting one year and ten days, in the course of which he achieved nothing worth recording, nor did Vahram I who succeeded him and reigned for three years.[14] 6 But Vahram's son, who had the same name as his father, reigned for seventeen years.[15] Vahram III tasted sovereignty for a mere four months.[16] He was given the title Saghanshah which he received not, I think, idly or without good reason but in accordance with an ancient ancestral custom. 7 When in fact the Persian kings make war on some neighbouring people of considerable size and importance and reduce them to submission, they do not kill the vanquished inhabitants but impose a tribute on them all and allow them to dwell in and cultivate the conquered territory. However, they consign the former leaders of the nation to a most pitiful fate and assign the title of ruler to their own sons, presumably in order to preserve the proud memory of their victory. 8 Now since the Segestani were subdued by his father Vahram II it was only natural that the son should be given the title Saghanshah, which is Persian for "king of the Segestani".

25. After the speedy demise of Vahram III Narsah immediately assumed the crown and ruled for seven years and five months.[17] He was succeeded by his son Hormizd II who was heir not only to his father's throne but also to a reign of identical duration. Strange though it may seem the fact is that both of them reigned for exactly the same number of months and years.

2 They were succeeded by Shapur II who enjoyed an exceedingly long reign the length of which coincided exactly with the length of his life.[18] Indeed when he was still in his mother's womb the future offspring was called to the throne.

Since it was uncertain whether the queen would give 3 birth to a male or a female child the nobles proposed a special reward for the magi if they

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12 On his return march Shapur was attacked and defeated by him and lost part of his booty.
13 272—273 A. D.
14 273—276 A. D.
15 276—293 A. D.
16 293 A. D.
17 293—302 A. D.
18 309/10—379 A. D.

would foretell the future. Accordingly they brought out a mare in the last stages of pregnancy and told the magi to predict what they thought would happen in its case. In this way they would be able to find out in a few days whether in the event the prediction had come true, which would enable them to form an estimate of the chances of fulfilment of whatever would be foretold in the case of the human being. Now I cannot say exactly what was the precise nature of the prediction in the case of the mare, since I have not received accurate information on that point, but, whatever it was, it proved correct. 4 When the nobles realized that the magi knew their art to perfection they urged them to expound their knowledge of future events with regard to the woman also. When the magi said that a male child would be born they no longer delayed, but putting the diadem around the mother's womb they proclaimed as Emperor the foetus conferring upon it the distinction of a name and a title when, I suppose, it had just reached that stage of developement at which it was capable of making a few slight jumping and throbbing movements inside the womb. 5 Thus they took for granted what in the natural order of things is uncertain and obscure, though they were not wide of the mark in their expectations, which were fulfilled to the letter and beyond it. Soon after in fact Shapur II was born. Possessed of the royal title at birth, he grew up on the throne and he grew old on it, living to the ripe old age of seventy. 6 In the twenty fourth year of his reign the city of Nisibis [19] fell into the hands of the Persians. It had long been subject to the Romans and it was their own Emperor, Jovian, who surrendered and abandoned it. The previous Emperor, Julian, had penetrated into the heart of the Persian Empire when he died suddenly and Jovian was proclaimed Emperor by the generals and the troops. 7 Hampered by the recentness of his accession and by the prevailing confusion engendered no doubt by the state of emergency that had brought him to power and finding himself, moreover, in the middle of enemy territory, he was in no position to effect a leisured and orderly settlement of affairs. In his anxiety, therefore, to terminate his sojourn in a foreign and a hostile land and to return with all speed to his own country he became party to an ignoble treaty, which to this very day is a blot on the Roman state. By it he confined thereafter the extent of his Empire within new frontiers, whittling away its far-flung corners. 8 However, the events of that period have been recorded by a host of earlier historians, and I have no time to dwell on them but must needs stick to my previous subject.

26. Shapur II was succeeded by his brother Ardashir who reigned for four years and then died. The son of Ardashir was also called Shapur [20] and he reigned for a total of five years. His son Vahram IV reigned for eleven

[19] Agathias' chronology is wrong. Nisibis was ceded to Persia by Jovian in 363 A.D.
[20] i. e. Shapur III.

years. He was given the title Kermanshah. 2 I have already explained the reason for this kind of title. Kerman was perhaps the name of a people or a place and no doubt Vahram acquired the title after they or it had been reduced by his father in much the same way as was the case with the earlier Roman practice, whereby an individual assumed a special name connected with the name of some other nation which he had conquered as for example "Africanus" and "Germanicus". 3 The next reign was marked by the accession to the throne of Persia of Yazdgard I [21] the son of Shapur, [22] a man whose memory has remained something of a legend among the Romans. It is indeed commonly reputed that when the Emperor Arcadius was on the point of death and was making his last will and testament he designated Yazdgard as guardin and custodian of his son Theodosius and of the entire Roman state. 4 This story has been handed down from generation to generation and preserved on the lips of men and is still repeated at the present time by both the upper classes and the common people. But I have not come across it in any document or in the works of any historian, not even in those which give an account of the death of Arcadius, with the single exception of Procopius.[23] And I do not find it at all surprising that Procopius, who with his encyclopaedic knowledge had read practically every historical work ever written, should have found a written version of this story in the works of some earlier historian which has so far eluded me who know next to nothing, if indeed I know anything at all. 5 What I do find extremely surprising is that Procopius does not confine himself at this point to a straightforward account of events but applauds and extols Arcadius for what he regards as the extraordinary wisdom of his decision. He says in fact that Arcadius though endowed with little discretion in other respects proved in this one matter to be particularly shrewd and far-sighted. 6 But whoever expresses admiration for this decision is, in my opinion, judging it in the light of later events and not by the logic of the original situation, since it hardly could have made sense to entrust one's nearest and dearest to a foreigner and a barbarian, the ruler of a bitterly hostile nation, a man who in matters of honour and justice was an unknown quantity and who on top of everything else was the adherent of a false religion. 7 If the infant came to no harm and if, thanks to the care and protection of his guardian, his throne was never in jeopardy though at the time he had not yet even been weaned, then one ought rather to praise the honesty of Yazdgard than the action of Arcadius. But these are questions which the reader must decide for himself according to his own criteria. 8 At any rate Yazdgard reigned twenty-one years during which time he never waged war against the Romans or harmed

21 399—421 A.D.

22 It is not altogether clear whether Agathias means Shapur III or Shapur II.

23 Procopius: History of the Wars, I. 2. 6. sq.

them in any other way, but his attitude was consistently peaceful and conciliatory either through coincidence or out of genuine consideration for the boy and concern for his duty as a guardian.

27. On his death he was succeeded by his son Vahram V who made an incursion into the territory of the Romans but when he met with a friendly and courteous reception from the generals stationed at the frontiers he withdrew swiftly and returned to his own imperial domain, having neither waged a war on his neighbours nor damaged their land in any other way. 2 After a reign of twenty years [24] he handed over the throne to his son Yazdgard II who reigned for seventeen years and four months. [25] 3 The next reign was that of Peroz [26] an exceedingly daring and warlike man. His mind was filled with grandiose ambitions, but his judgement was far from sound and he possessed a great deal more valour than discretion. 4 Consequently he lost his life in an expedition against the Ephthalites not so much, I imagine, through the strength of his opponents as through his own recklessness. Though he should have taken all the necessary precautions and reconnaissance measures to safeguard his advance into enemy territory against ambush he fell straight into a trap, a series of carefullly camouflaged pits and trenches that stretched over the plain for a very great distance. He perished there together with his army in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, outmanoeuvred by the Huns — an ignominious way of ending his life. The Ephthalites are in fact a Hunnic people. 5 His brother Valash who succeeded him to the throne was not conspicuous for any military achievements not only on account of his mild and gentle disposition and natural aversion to violence but also because his reign was a very short one, amounting in fact to a mere four years. [27] 6 He was succeeded by Kavad the son of Peroz, who waged many wars against the Romans and won many victories over the neighbouring barbarian peoples. His reign was indeed a period of unceasing turbulence and strife. 7 In his dealings with his subjects he was harsh and cruel, showing no respect for the social order, introducing revolutionary innovations into the body politic and subverting their age-old customs. He even reputed to have made a law that wives should be held in common not, I imagine, with a view to any of the utilitarian ends suggested by the hidden meaning of Socrates' words in the Platonic dialogue [28] but merely in order to facilitate concubinage and allow any man who felt so inclined to sleep with any woman of his own choosing, even if she happened to be somebody else's wife.

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[24] 421—438/9 A. D.
[25] 438/9—457 A. D.
[26] 459—484.
[27] 484—488.
[28] cf. Plato: Republic Bk. V 457 c. sq.

28. And, so, as this legally-sanctioned outrage grew rife the nobles could bear the disgrace no longer and began to voice their anger openly. It was in fact this law which was the principal cause of the conspiracy against him and of his subsequent downfall. In the eleventh year of his reign the nobles all rose in a body against him and deposed him, casting him into the "Prison of Oblivion".[29] 2 Zamasp was then invested with the royal power. He too was a son of Peroz and apart from that enjoyed a reputation for great gentleness of character and justice. In this way they thought that they had settled everything to their satisfaction and that henceforth they would be able to live in peace and quiet. 3 But it was not long before Kavad escaped either aided and abetted by his wife who chose to die for his sake as Procopius tells us[30] or by some other means. At any rate the fact remains that he did escape from prison to the land of the Ephthalites where he threw himself on the protection of their king. 4 Mindful of the vicissitudes of fortune the king received him with great kindness and never ceased to comfort him and alleviate his distress of mind, showing him every consideration, addressing him words of encouragement which were calculated to raise his spirits, feasting him at his table and frequently making him drink from his own cup, dressing him in costly garments and in fact omitting none of the niceties of hospitality. Not long afterwards he gave his daughter's hand in marriage to his guest and having entrusted him with a sufficiently large army to ensure his return sent him back home to crush all opposition and regain his former prosperity. 5 There is a natural tendency for things to work out very differently from what people expect, often upsetting and completely belying their calculations and what happened on that occasion was a case in point. In a very short space of time the pendulum of Kavad's fortunes had swung 6 from one extreme to the other and back again: he had exchanged the state of a king for the lot of a convict, escaped from prison to become a refugee and a suppliant in a strange land, and then, after having been a suppliant and a guest, had become the close relation of a king. Then on his return home he regained his throne without effort or danger, finding it vacant and as it were waiting to receive him, for all the world as though he had never been deprived of it. 7 Zamasp in fact voluntarily abdicated, wisely making a virtue of necessity and preferring, after having enjoyed four years on the throne, to renounce the pride of office and the pomp of power in exchange for a safe retirement. 8 Kavad, now more restrained[31] than he had formerly been, ruled for another thirty years in

[29] According to Procopius (History of the Wars I, V, 8) the place was so named because it was forbidden under pain of death to make any mention of those imprisoned there.

[30] Procopius: History of the Wars I VI 1—9.

[31] The Greek is ambiguous and could mean "more powerful" and has been rendered thus by previous translators. However it is a fact that after his restoration Kavad eventually broke with the revolutionary Mazdakite movement.

addition to the previous eleven so that his reign embraced a total of forty-one years.[32]

29. Past generations of historians have written full and detailed accounts of the events of both parts of Kavad's reign. There is one point, however, and I think it is worth making, 2 which they have not dealt with, namely the startling coincidence that at that time much the same thing happened in both the Roman and the Persian Empire, that as though by some strange quirk of fate disaster fell almost simultaneously upon the monarchs of both states. Shortly before in fact the Emperor of the Romans, Zeno the Isaurian, whose original name was Tarasicodissa, was the victim of a plot by Illus, Basiliscus and Conon aided and abetted by Verina and was dethroned and driven out, barely escaping to Isauria in time. But he returned later, put down the usurper Basiliscus who had reigned for not more than two years, regained complete control of affairs and remained on the throne until his death, which, however, occurred not very long afterwards.[33] 3 At the same time the Western Emperor Nepos[34] met with similar or rather even greater misfortunes. As a result of the intrigues of Orestes he was obliged to flee from Italy and lost the Imperial throne which he never regained. He died a private citizen.[35] 4 Such, then, were the extraordinary vicissitudes to which by some strange coincidence the major powers were at that time subjected. Let those critics whose practice it is to analyse and account for events of a problematic nature seek to explain these events, and they may as far as I am concerned suggest whatever explanation they wish. However I must return to the subject of my earlier excursus.

5 On the death of Kavad, which occurred in the fifth year of the Roman Emperor Justinian, the famous Chosroes, whose reign brings us into our own day and age,[36] succeeded his father to the throne. His exploits were many and various. Some of them have been previously recorded by Procopius and of those that have not some have already been dealt with by me, whereas others will receive a proper treatment in due course. 6 But in order to maintain a strict chronological sequence I shall confine myself for the time being to pointing out that his reign lasted some forty-eight years in the course of which he won many brilliant victories. His reign in fact marks a pinnacle of success and outstanding achievement reached by no previous Persian monarch, not at any rate if one is to make an over-all

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32 488—498/9 A. D. and 498/9—531 A. D.

33 Agathias' chronology seems to have gone wildly astray. Zeno fled from Constantinople in the August of 476. He died on the 9th April, A. D. 491. It seems that Agathias has confused the revolt of Illus (484—488) with the earlier conspiracy in which Illus was also implicated.

34 28th August 475 A. D.

35 In 480 A. D.

36 531—579 A. D.

comparison of individual reigns. Indeed it could hardly be claimed that even Cyrus the son of Cambyses or Darius the son of Hystaspes or for that matter the famous Xerxes who opened up the seas to cavalry and the mountains to shipping,[37] would stand comparison with him. 7 Yet his unhappy and inglorious end was in the starkest contrast to the greatness of his past life. He was sojourning at the time in the village of Thamnon in the Carduchian hills, (he had moved there for the summer, since 8 the region was favoured with a temperate climate) when Maurice the son of Paul who had been put in command of the forces in the East by the Roman Emperor Tiberius I Constantine made a sudden irruption into the adjoining district of Arzanena. And, as though that were not enough, Maurice then proceeded to ravage and plunder the whole area. Soon he had crossed the river Zirma and was still advancing, burning and plundering everything that lay in his path. 9 While Maurice was engaged on this work of wholesale destruction and devastation Chosroes, who being near enough to get a clear view already of the smoke rising up found the spectacle of enemy fire, which he had never seen before, too much for him, and was so stunned and dismayed that he took no action whatsoever either offensive or defensive. Instead he gave himself up to excessive grief at what had happened and was seized immediately by despondency and despair. 10 Accordingly he was conveyed with great speed on a litter to his palaces in Seleucia and Ctesiphon. It was more of a flight than a retreat. Not long after that he ended his days.

30. However, I seem somehow to have allowed myself to get carried away and have, I think, become so enthralled with these fascinating events as to skip the whole intervening period and embark gaily on a recital of what happened at a much later date. But now that I am fully conscious of the nature and extent of my digression I had better postpone the discussion of such matters for the present. They will be dealt with in the course of my narrative of the period to which they belong. Meanwhile I shall resume the thread of my earlier account.

2 I have kept my promise and given a complete chronological record of the reigns of the kings of Persia. It is, I think, a true and an accurate one since it is based on Persian sources. 3 Sergius the interpreter managed in fact during a stay in Persia to prevail upon the keepers of the royal archives to grant him access to the relevant literature. He did so, as it happens, in response to frequent requests from me. Fortunately, when he stated that his sole purpose was to preserve even among our nation the memory of what they, the Persians, knew and cherished, they immediately obliged, thinking that it would enhance the prestige of their kings if the Romans too were to learn

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[37] i. e. the bridging of the Hellespont (Dardanelles) and the digging of a canal through the Athos peninsula.

what kind of men they were together with their numbers and the order and manner in which the succession has been maintained. 4 What Sergius did then was to take the names and dates and principal events and put them into good Greek, a task for which he was peculiarly well-fitted being much and away the best translator of his day, so much so that his talents had won him the admiration of Chosroes himself and made him the acknowledged master of his subject in both Empires. After having made what must have been an extremely accurate translation he was as good as his word and most obligingly brought me all his material, urging me to fulfil the purpose for which it had been entrusted to him. And that is exactly what I have done. 5 Consequently even if there are some discrepancies between my account of the reign of Kavad and Procopius' version of it we must follow the authority of the Persian documents and credit their contents with greater veracity.

Now that I have acquitted myself of my task let me resume my account of events in Lazica. I had interrupted it at the following point:

6 Because of his cowardice, because of his defeat at the hands of Martin and the Roman forces and of his disgraceful retreat to Iberia, Nachoragan was put to an extremely cruel death the manner of which I have already described. 7 Realizing that he was in no position to fight the Romans in Lazica, since they had control of the sea and so had no difficulty in procuring whatever they needed, whilst he was obliged to send a few scanty supplies to his troops over immense tracts of desert conveying them with incredible difficulty on the shoulders of porters and the backs of pack-animals, Chosroes decided to put an end to the war on all fronts. There seemed to be no point in protracting a faulty and defective peace which was confined only to certain regions and every reason for giving it general and universal validity. 8 Consequently he dispatched a very high-ranking Persian dignitary, a man by the name of Zich, on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople. 9 On his arrival there he met the Emperor Justinian and they had a lengthy exchange of views. Finally they agreed that both the Romans and the Persians should retain whatever they had acquired in Lazica by right of conquest, whether towns or forts, and that both sides should observe a general armistice and refrain from all forms of mutual aggression pending some more far-reaching and authoritative agreement between the sovereigns of both states.[38] And so Zich having accomplished his mission returned home. 10 When these terms had been announced to the generals the armies refrained from all further hostilities for a considerable length of time, and a situation which had already arisen spontaneously was officially endorsed.

[38] Autumn of 557 A.D.

BOOK 5

1. And so these great rival powers laid down their arms in accordance with the agreement and remained at peace for a very long time, with neither side employing any kind of force against the other. 2 But meanwhile the Tzani, or at least the majority of them, in spite of the fact that they had long been allies and subjects of the Romans had given up their settled ways of life and turned to brigandage and kept raiding the district of Pontus and its neighbourhood ravaging the fields and molesting wayfarers. Nevertheless a part of them still remained true to their former ways and had no hand in these excesses. The Tzani, incidentally, live to the south of the Euxine near Trebizond. They even crossed over into Armenia wherever it was practicable, plundering and behaving with all the hostility of declared enemies. 3 Accordingly Theodorus whom I think I have already mentioned several times, a member of their nation and the most distinguished of the Roman commanders, was sent to deal with them. It was only natural that he should have been the man whom the Emperor selected for the job since he was better acquainted with his own country than anyone else and knew exactly from which point he could invade it most successfully, which was the best place for camping and how best to track down the enemy. 4 Setting off therefore from Lazica with a not inconsiderable body of men he crossed the border due west on the opposite side of the river Phasis and penetrated immediately into the heart of what at the time was enemy territory. Encamping in the vicinity of the town of Theodorias and the place called Rhizaeum and building a rampart round the camp he summoned those peaceful and friendly elements in the population which were not yet disaffected and showered gifts on them, praising them the while for their moderation and good sense. But to those who had violated the terms of their alliance and rebelled without compunction he prepared to mete out summary punishment by force of arms. 5 But the enemy lost no time in striking the first blow by attacking the fort. Concentrating their forces on the commanding heights of a nearby hill they rained down spears and arrows on the Romans, who were thrown into great confusion by this unexpected piece of daring. 6 Nevertheless many of them eagerly rushed out to the attack. But they advanced in an irregular fashion without waiting to draw the enemy out on to lower ground. Instead they tried in a fit of disorganized fury to climb up the hill, holding their shields tilted over their heads and stooping slightly. 7 The Tzani however, throwing their spears from a great height

and rolling down stones, had no difficulty in dislodging them, after which they sallied forth against them slew about forty men and put the rest to an ignominious rout. 8 Elated by their unexpected success the barbarians moved close to the camp. Fierce fighting ensued with the Tzani determined to get in and take all by storm and the Romans convinced that not just failure to repulse the enemy but anything short of exterminating them would be a stain on their honour. It was a scene of violent and desperate hand-to-hand fighting in which both sides threw all their weight into the struggle. For a long time the issue hung precariously in the balance and the multifarious and all-pervasive din of battle raged confusedly.

2. On seeing that the enemy were leaderless and were not employing safe tactics or attacking the enclosure at various points but were all huddled into one part, the Roman commander Theodorus ordered some of his troops to stand their ground and face the enemy whilst he secretly dispatched as large a force as he could muster to take the enemy in the rear. 2 Advancing stealthily they appeared behind the backs of the enemy and suddenly let out a loud and piercing war-cry. The Tzani were thrown into complete confusion and had only one thought in their minds — to take to their heels like cowards. And so they fled, almost beside themselves with fear, and the Romans made short work of them, killing two thousand and scattering the rest. 3 Having thus forcibly subdued the entire nation, Theodorus sent a report of what had happened to the Emperor and asked what further measures he wished him to take. Whereupon Justinian bade him impose upon them a fixed annual tribute to be paid in perpetuity. It was his purpose that in this way they should become aware of their position as dependants and realize that they belonged to a tributary state and were the members of a subject race. Accordingly their names were all inscribed in a register, and they were subjected to the payment of a tribute which to this very day they are still paying.

4 The Emperor Justinian was especially pleased at this success and regarded it, I think as one of his major achievements; so much so that in one of his own supplementary decrees, which are known as "Novels", where he is enumerating his other victories he makes special mention of this people.[1]

[1] Nov. I praef. The relevant passage may be translated as follows: "Busied as we are with the cares of Empire, our mind intent on such weighty matters as ensuring that the Persians cause no trouble, that the Vandals and the Moors maintain their allegiance, that the Carthaginians continue in the possession of their ancient freedom to which they have been restored and that the Tzani, who have now for the first time come under the dominion of the Romans,, may be classed among the subject peoples, (an unprecedented boon which God has bestowed upon the Romans only in our reign) we are in addition beset by the multitude of individual problems continually submitted to us by our subjects and for which in each and every case we give the appropriate ruling".

5 So, once all aggression was ended and the Tzani had been firmly put in their place as described, Theodorus returned to the generals in Lazica.

3. Not long before these events Constantinople was once more almost completely razed to the ground by a terrible earthquake.[2] A convulsion of unparalleled magnitude and duration, its horror was further accentuated by the time of year and by the fateful and harrowing events that followed in its wake. 2 It was in fact that time of year when autumn was drawing to a close and the traditional Roman Festival of the Names[3] was being celebrated. The cold weather had already set in, which was to be expected seeing that the sun was advancing towards the winter solstice and approaching the sign of Capricorn. It was particularly severe in the eighth zone or "Clima of the Euxine" as I believe the specialists in this field call it.[4] 3 Then towards midnight when all the citizens were sleeping peacefully in their beds disaster suddenly struck, and every structure was instantly shaken to its foundations. The tremors, which were violent to start with, kept growing in intensity as though rising to a catastrophic climax. 4 Everybody was awakened and shrieks and lamentations could be heard, accompanied by the usual pious ejaculations that spring spontaneously to the lips in such moments of crisis. Each successive tremor was followed by a deep, growling sound like thunder issuing from the bowels of the earth, which doubled the general sense of terror and alarm. The surrounding air grew dim with the vaporous exhalations of a smoky haze rising from an unknown source, and gleamed with a dull radiance. 5 Panic-stricken, the people poured out of their houses, filling the streets and alleyways, as though destruction could not overtake them just as easily out of doors as indoors. 6 The fact is that every quarter of the city is so heavily built up that wide open spaces entirely free of obstructions are an extremely rare sight. Nevertheless their fear and anxiety of mind seemed to subside gradually at the mere possibility of somehow turning

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[2] 14th — 23rd December A. D. 557.

[3] The Brumalia, a festival of pagan origin offerred by the Emperor to certain classes of the population. It lasted twenty-four days (24th Nov. — 17th Dec.), each day corresponding to one of the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet and each guest being invited on the day corresponding to the initial letter of his name.

[4] Ancient geographers usually give seven climata (or belts of latitude), the positions of important cities being fixed with respect to these zones. Though the Byzantines were content simply to transmit more or less mechanically the data contained in ancient authorities such as Ptolemy, it did become necessary in the course of time for them to add to or otherwise modify the ancient lists indicating the position of the world's major cities. In the process of such adjustments Byzantium came to be erroneously inserted into the seventh instead of the fifth zone. There is also evidence however (cf. Martianus Capella VIII, 876) of a differently constructed division of the inhabited world into eight belts of latitude. Agathias seems here to be referring to this or some such scheme employed by the savants of his day who, he tells us, inserted Byzantium into the eighth zone.

their eyes towards heaven in an attempt to propitiate the Deity. They got a slight wetting from a shower of sleet and suffered greatly from the cold, but even so they did not take shelter with the exception of those who took refuge in the churches, postrating themselves before the altars. 7 Large numbers of women and not just the members of the lower classes but even persons of breeding and distinction roamed about and mingled freely with the men; the ordered structure of society with its due observance of decorum and respect for privilege and the proper distinctions of rank was thrown into wild confusion and trampled underfoot. 8 Slaves, in the grip of the present and more compelling fear, showed contempt for their masters and, disobeying their instructions, congregated in the places of worship. Men in authority and men of no consequence were placed on an equal footing owing to the common danger and the general prospect of imminent annihilation. 9 During that night many houses were destroyed, particularly in the district of Rhegium, which is the port of Constantinople. Many amazing and incredible events occurred too in the course of that night. In one locality the roofs of buildings, and this was true of stone and wooden structures alike, came apart, disclosing through yawning gaps a clear vista of sky and stars, and then suddenly fell back again into place. Elsewhere pillars on an upper floor were catapulted by the force of the convulsion and shot through the air over the tops of the nearby houses, travelling a long way before they eventually came crashing down and smashed into pieces whatever they landed on. In other places there were other still more horrifying things happening, and, though these followed an oft-repeated pattern which will recur time and again as long as this imperfect world of ours remains, yet their impact was on that occasion more shocking because they all occurred simultaneously.

10 Large numbers of ordinary people perished in the disaster. Of the persons of rank and of those who were members of the senate the only one to lose his life was Anatolius, a man who had been raised to the dignity of consul and was in charge of the superintendence and financial administration of the Imperial household and estates. The Romans call these officials "curatores".[5] 11 Anatolius was sleeping at the time in his customary bedchamber. The apartment was adorned with a variety of marble plaques attached to the wall, of the kind that are lavishly and ostentatiously displayed by those who are inordinately fond of such superfluous and unnecessary bric-à-brac. One of these plaques, which was fastened to the wall next to the bed, was shaken loose from its fittings and wrenched off by the violence of the tremors. It came down with all its weight on his head, and smashed his skull. He had barely enough time to utter a deep and muffled groan of pain and then sank back on his bed. Death had overtaken him.

[5] i. e. he was a "curator domus divinae".

4. When day had dawned people moved forward to meet one another gazing joyfully into the faces of their nearest and dearest, kissing and embracing and weeping with delight and surprise. 2 But when the dead body of Anatolius was carried away for burial some of the people in the crowd began to spread the rumour that his death had been a just punishment since he had been an evil and unscrupulous man and had robbed many people of their possessions. This, they said, was the end to which his notorious activities, the placards and the purple-coloured cloths that he had fastened in such profusion to the houses of the wealthy,[6] had brought him. Under the false pretext of loyal service to the Emperor he appropriated everything by means of his relentless exactions, violating the dying wishes of parents and showing utter disregard for the laws, which require that children should inherit their parents' property. 3 These at any rate were the sort of whispered rumours being circulated among the common people and they seemed to provide a simple explanation for what had happened. Personally I should be extremely hesitant to advance any sort of explanation for such occurrences. Undoubtedly the earthquake would have been a very real boon if it had been able to distinguish the wicked from the good, causing the former to perish miserably and graciously sparing the latter. But even granted that Anatolius really was a wicked man there were countless others in the city no better or even worse than he was. Yet he was suddenly struck down whilst the others have remained unscathed. 4 It is, therefore, no plain or easy matter, I think, to ascertain why of all men Anatolius was the only one to lose his life. If we are to accept the Platonic view[7] according to which a more wretched and unhappy fate awaits those who have lived evil lives and who, instead of paying the penalty for their crimes in this world either by dying a violent death or by receiving some other form of punishment, depart from this life having contrived to escape purification and bearing like runaway slaves the scars of their wrongdoing,[8] then it would seem after all that the man who suffers for his misdeeds is the more fortunate among his fellows than the man who gets off scot-free. 5 However, there is much to be said for not interfering with and indeed for encouraging the notion popularly entertained with regard to these matters, since the fear of dying a horrible death may have a deterrent or moderating effect on some wrongdoers. 6 Nevertheless it is quite obvious that a long life of untroubled success is no more proof of virtue than a violent death, however horrible, is evidence of exceptional wickedness. But we shall best be able to establish the nature of our conduct in this world and the degree of punishment or reward due when we pass into the next. At any rate people are

[6] Indicating that they had been confiscated by order of the Emperor.
[7] cf. Plato: Gorgias 476a—479e and 524e.
[8] Runaway slaves were branded.

entitled to their opinions on this matter however much they may differ. For my part I must resume the thread of my earlier narrative.

5. The tremors continued for several days and though they had lost most of their initial fury and were of much shorter duration they were still sufficiently violent to disrupt any remaining semblance of order. 2 Fantastic stories and extraordinary predictions to the effect that the end of the world was at hand began to circulate among the people. Charlatans and self-appointed prophets roamed the streets prophesying whatever came into their heads and terrifying still more the majority of the people who were particularly impressionable because they had already become demoralized. Still more ominous were the prognostications of those who pretended to be seized by a prophetic frenzy and possessed by some supernatural power, claiming that they had learned the future from the spirits that consorted with them and bragging about their demonic possession. 3 Others, as might have been expected, pondering over the motions and aspects of the stars, hinted darkly at greater calamities and at what amounted almost to a cosmic disaster. Society in fact never fails to throw up a bewildering variety of such persons in times of misfortune. Luckily both predictions proved wrong. In my opinion these dabblers in the occult who sought to encroach on the intellectual preserve of the Deity ought to have been prosecuted for impiety. 4 But there was nobody at the time who was not in a state of abject fear and terror. Consequently prayers and hymns of supplication were heard in every quarter as the entire people gathered together for this purpose. The ideals to which people constantly pay lip-service but rarely put into practice were then eagerly pursued. Everybody suddenly became just in his dealings towards his neighbour, so much so that even the magistrates gave up all thoughts of personal gain and began to administer justice in accordance with the laws and those who were influential in some other way lived quietly and peacefully, refraining from the most shameful abuses and leading generally virtuous lives. 5 Some even completely changed their mode of life and embraced a solitary existence in the hills, renouncing property and privilege and all that is most pleasing to mankind. Many donations were brought to the churches and prominent citizens walked the streets at night distributing free gifts of blankets and food in abundance to the helpless and pitiful wrecks who lay maimed and mutilated in great numbers on the ground, keeping body and soul together by begging for their bread. 6 All these good deeds, however, were performed for a limited period of time, as long as the terror was still fresh in people's minds. As soon, in fact, as there were signs that the danger had receded most people reverted to their old ways. This type of response could not properly be called justice or firm and active piety of the sort which stamps itself on the mind through the operation of sound convictions steadfastly and zealously held; no, it might with more

truth be termed an irregular expedient and a highly perilous form of traffic aimed at escaping and averting a passing crisis. It is in fact only under the stimulus of sudden fear and for as long as the emergency lasts that we make a few reluctant and perfunctory concessions to the ideal of charity.

6. During this period the debate on the subject of exhalations was reopened. The name of the Stagirite[9] was frequently bandied about. One minute it was asserted that he had given an accurate explanation of the nature of earthquakes and their causes, the next it was affirmed that he was altogether wide of the mark. 2 Some cited, in support of his theory that a dense and smoky vapour imprisoned in subterranean cavities is responsible for such upheavals, the device invented previously by Anthemius. 3 Anthemius of Tralles was by profession an engineer or architect, one of those people who apply geometrical speculation to material objects and make models or imitations of the natural world. 4 Anthemius was absolutely outstanding in his field and was a first-rate mathematician enjoying a similar pre-eminence to that enjoyed, mutatis mutandis, by his brother Metrodorus in the sphere of grammar. 5 Their mother was, I think, particularly fortunate to have given birth to such talented children. In addition, moreover, to these two she was also the mother of that eminent lawyer and accomplished advocate Olympius and of Dioscorus and Alexander, both of them extremely skilled in the art of medicine. Of the latter pair Dioscorus spent his life in his native city, where he practised his profession with remarkable distinction and success, whereas Alexander took up residence in Rome, whither he had been summoned to occupy a position of great distinction. The fame of Anthemius and Metrodorus spread far and wide until it reached no less a person than the Emperor. 6 Accordingly they were summoned to Constantinople where they spent the rest of their lives, exhibiting, each of them, signal proof of their own particular excellence, the one by educating many of the young sons of the nobility and imparting the knowledge of that sublime and beautiful discipline in such a way as to fire the imaginations of all with the love of eloquence, the other by designing the most wonderful artistic creations in the capital and in many other places, indeed so wonderful that as long as they were standing their sheer beauty would suffice, without a single word being spoken about them, to perpetuate the glory of his memory. 7 But the whole incident which caused me to mention this man shall now be related without further delay:

There was in Constantinople a man called Zeno, a professional rhetorician, who besides his other distinctions was a close acquaintance of the Emperor. He was a next-door neighbour of Anthemius, their two houses being joined to one another and built on the same area of ground. 8 In the course of time rather strained relations and a certain amount of ill will developed between them, either because of some possibly unprecedented piece of prying

[9] cf. Aristotle, Meterologica, 2, 365b, 35 sqq.

or because of the construction of some abnormally high annexe which blocked the light or for some other of the many reasons that inevitably bring next-door neighbours into conflict.

7. Now Anthemius outmanoeuvred in argument by his opponent's legal skill and finding himself no match for him when it came to a battle of words retaliated in the following manner by availing himself of his own professional expertise:

2 Zeno had a fine, spacious and sumptuously decorated upper room, in which he loved to pass the time of day and entertain his close friends. The ground-floor rooms underneath it, however, belonged to Anthemius' part of the house, so that the ceiling of the one was the floor of the other. 3 *Here* Anthemius filled some huge cauldrons with water and placed them at intervals in various parts of the building. To these he fastened tapering, trumpet-shaped pipes encased in leather and sufficiently wide at their bottom ends to allow them to fit tightly over the rims of the cauldrons. He then fixed their upper ends securely and neatly to the beams and joists, so that the air in them should rise up freely along the pipes until it exerted a direct pressure on the ceiling, while the leather held it in and prevented it from escaping. 4 Having secretly set up this apparatus he laid a fire under the base of each cauldron and kindled a powerful flame. As the water grew hot and boiled a great head of steam began to rise. Unable to escape, it rose up the pipes, building up pressure as it went and subjecting the roof to a series of shocks, until it shook the whole structure with just enough force to make the woodwork creak and wobble slightly. 5 Zeno and his friends were terrified and ran panic-stricken into the street with cries of horror and alarm. And when Zeno was in attendance at the palace he began to enquire of the notables what they thought about the earthquake and whether it had done them any damage. When they exclaimed "what an idea! God forbid that such a thing should happen! Perish the thought!", and began to expostulate indignantly with him for his lack of taste in concocting such gruesome horror-stories, he was completely nonplussed. Though he was unable to disbelieve the evidence of his senses in a matter that had occurred so recently, yet he could not bring himself to go on insisting in the face of the combined authority and disapproval of so many distinguished personages.

8. Those who explained the origin of earthquakes in terms of exhalations and smoky vapours made much of this story. "Anthemius", they would say, "discerning what it is that causes earthquakes to occur, achieved a similar effect by reproducing artificially the workings of nature". And there was something in what they said, though not as much as they imagined. 2 For these theories, however plausible and sophisticated they may appear to be, do not in my view amount to positive proof. One would not, for instance, regard the fact that despite their treading so lightly Maltese dogs walking

about on a roof cause it to shake as a parallel case, or use it as though it were an adequate illustration of his hypothesis. 3 Such things should, indeed be regarded as impressive and entertaining mechanical tricks, but one must seek a different explanation (if indeed any explanation is necessary) for natural calamities, since this was not the only trick that Anthemius played on Zeno. He also produced the effect of thunder and lighting in his room, using 4 a slightly concave disk with a reflective surface by means of which he trapped the sun's rays and then turned the disk round and suddenly shot a powerful beam of light into the room, so powerful in fact that it dazzled everyone it came into contact with. At the same time he contrived to produce a deep, booming sound by the percussion of resonant objects and achieve the effect of loud and terrifying peals of thunder. When it finally dawned on Zeno where all these events originated, he publicly prostrated himself at the feet of the Emperor, accusing his neighbour of wicked and criminal behaviour. He got so carried away by his anger that he coined a rather elegant turn of phrase. 5 He began declaiming in fact in mock poetic style before the senate, saying that it was impossible for him a mere mortal to contend single-handed at one and the same time with "Zeus the Lightener" and "Loud-Thunderer" and Poseidon the Earth-Shaker". [10] 6 At any rate this particular skill undoubtedy produces some very fine toys, but that does not necessarily mean that nature follows the same pattern. Still each man is entitled to his own opinion in these matters, and I really must return to what I was saying earlier on.

9. During that winter, then, the city was afflicted by these calamities. For several days everyone had the impression that the ground was shaking even though the tremors had ceased and it was already quite firm and motionless. People had not yet recovered from the shock of their recent experience and their minds were clouded by nagging doubts and persistent fears. 2 The Emperor tried to restore the large number of public buildings affected by the disaster. Some of them were insecure and unsound, others had already tumbled down. He was particularly concerned about the Great Church. [11] Previously burnt by the populace, [12] he had built it up anew right from its foundations, creating a church of amazing beauty which was further enhanced by its vastly increased dimensions, its majestic proportions and by a lavish profusion of ornamental marble. It was built of baked brick and lime on a structure of iron girders, the use of wood being avoided in order to prevent it from ever being easily set on fire again. The architect was the

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[10] The words in inverted commas are of course Homeric epithets and the functions described by them are those commonly assigned in mythology to these particular gods.

[11] The church of St. Sophia, of course.

[12] During the Nika Revolt of 532 A. D.

celebrated Anthemius of Tralles, whom I have already had cause to mention. 3 On this occasion however the church had lost the top of its dome[13] as a result of the earthquake. The Emperor therefore had it repaired, reinforced and raised to a greater height. 4 Anthemius, however, was by then a long time dead. Consequently Isidore the Younger[14] and the other architects, after studying the original form of the structure and observing by a comparison with what was still intact the nature of the part affected and the extent to which the construction had been faulty, left the arches on the east and west sides exactly as they were, but extended the curved superstructure of the interior faces[15] of the arches on the north and south sides, so that they described a slightly broader arc. The result was that they fitted more closely into the other arches, thus forming a regular square. In this way the architects were able to span the empty space[16] in all its immensity and get rid of the small area left by the underlying oblong figure.[17] They then replaced the dome. 5 But despite the fact that it is straighter, despite its balanced curves and regular outline it has become narrower, its lines have hardened and it has lost something of its old power to inspire awe and wonder in the beholder. It is, however, much more firmly and securely fixed.

6 Well, as far as the church is concerned I think I have said all that needs to be said in a historical work and as much as is consistent with the course of my narrative. To embark upon a detailed eulogy of all its wonderful features would be superfluous and irrelevant to the purpose of the present work. 7 If anyone who lives far from the capital wishes to get as clear and comprehensive a picture of the church as he would if he were there to view it in person, then he could hardly do better than to read the poem in hexameters of Paul the son of Cyrus and grandson of Florus. Paul was the foremost of those officials known as "Silentiarii" or ushers, who are entrusted with maintaining silence around the emperor's person. Though he came of noble and distinguished parents and was heir to an immense family fortune, he was devoted chiefly to the study of literature and eloquence, and it was on these cultured pursuits that he prided himself most. He is in fact the author of very many poems of considerable merit, among which that written on the subject of the Great Church reaches a higher pitch of refinement and erudition than the rest, which, indeed, is in keeping with its more exalted theme. 8 In it will be found the ordered plan of the building described in full detail, whilst the various types of marble are surveyed and scrutinized with the exquisite subtlety of a connoisseur. The

13 7th May 558 A.D.
14 i.e. Isidore of Miletus.
15 i.e. those facing the central nave over which the dome was placed.
16 i.e. that overlooked by the dome.
17 i.e. that part of the „empty space" not spanned by the earlier arch.

perfect balance of structural and visual requirements achieved in the building of the porches, the sizes and heights employed in the construction of the whole edifice, the interplay of rectilinear and circular figures, of arches and pendentives, the lavish use of gold and silver in the decoration of the tabernacle, all these features and any others worth noting, whether great or small, are described in the poem and are presented as clearly and as vividly to the reader as they would be to the most observant and assiduous of visitors. 9 This second restoration of the church, however, took place at a somewhat later date.[18]

10. During that year at the beginning of spring[19] a second outbreak of plague swept the capital, destroying a vast number of people. From the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Justinian when the plague first spread to our part of the world it had never really stopped, but had simply moved on from one 2 place to another, giving in this way something of a respite to those who had survived its ravages. It now returned to Constantinople almost as though it had been cheated on the first occasion into a needlessly hasty departure. 3 People died in great numbers as though seized by a violent and sudden attack of apoplexy. Those who stood up to the disease longest barely lasted five days. The form the epidemic took was not unlike that of the earlier outbreak. A swelling in the glands of the groin was accompanied by a high non-intermittent fever which raged night and day with unabated intensity and never left its victim until the moment of death. 4 Some experienced no pain or fever or any of the initial symptoms but simply dropped dead while about their normal business at home or in the street or wherever they happened to be. People of all ages were struck down indiscriminately, but the heaviest toll was among the young and vigorous and especially among the men, women being on the whole much less affected. 5 According to the ancient oracles of the Egyptians and to the leading astrologers of present-day Persia there occurs in the course of endless time a succession of lucky and unlucky cycles. These luminaries would have us believe that we are at present passing through one of the most disastrous and inauspicious of such cycles: hence the universal prevalence of war and internal dissension and of frequent and persistent epidemics of plague. 6 Others hold the view that divine anger is responsible for the destruction, exacting just retribution from mankind for its sins and decimating whole populations. 7 It is not for me to set myself up as a judge in these matters or to undertake to demonstrate the truth of one theory rather than the other. Such a task would perhaps be beyond my comprehension, or even if it were not, it would be neither necessary nor

[18] 562 A.D.
[19] 558 A.D.

relevant to the present narrative. An account, in fact even a summary of events, is all that the rules of historical composition require of me.

11. The tragedy just described did not mark the end of this stormy period but was followed by others of an equally horrifying and alarming nature. What these were I shall presently explain, after first making a brief and passing reference to earlier history.

2 In ancient times the Huns inhabited the region east of lake Maeotis [20] to the north of the river Don, as did the rest of the barbarian peoples established in Asia on the near side of Mt. Imaeus. All these peoples were referred to by the general name of Scythians or Huns, whereas individual tribes had their own particular names, rooted in ancestral tradition, such as Cotrigurs, Utigurs, Ultizurs, Burugundi and so on and so forth. 3 Several generations later either following the lead of a hind as popular tradition would have it or as a result of some other fortuitous occurrence, they crossed over into Europe and were somehow conveyed across the point where lake Maeotis flows into the Euxine, [21] which had hitherto been considered impossible. However, they crossed it and wandered far and wide over foreign territory.

By their sudden and unexpected raids they did incalculable damage to the local populations, even to the extent of displacing the original inhabitants and occupying their lands. 4 But their stay was destined to be a brief one, and at the end of it they vanished without leaving any trace of themselves. This fact is illustrated by the case of the Ultizurs and the Burugundi who were well-known right up to the time of the Emperor Leo [22] and were considered a force to be reckoned with, but whom we in our day and age neither know nor, I imagine, are likely to, since they have either perished or migrated to the ends of the earth. 5 However, during the year in question when the plague reached the capital all the other Hunnic tribes were in existence and indeed were still at the height of their fame though for some reason best known to themselves they had chosen to move south at this time and had encamped not far from the banks of the Danube. 6 As usual, with the approach of winter, the river froze to a considerable depth and the ice was already hard enough to be crossed on horseback. Whereupon Zabergan, the leader of the Cotrigurs galloped across the frozen waters with a huge force of cavalry and crossed over without difficulty into the territory of the Romans. [23] Finding the area deserted and advancing unopposed, he passed through Moesia and Scythia and invaded Thrace. 7 At this point he split up his army, sending one part into Greece to raid and plunder the

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20 The Sea of Azov.
21 presumably the Strait of Kerch.
22 i. e. Leo I 457—74 A. D.
23 March 559 A. D.

unprotected places there and a second detachment into the Thracian Chersonese.

12. From North to South as far as the centre of its southern tip, the eastern coastline of the Cheronese is washed by the Hellespont. Only a narrow piece of land a mere forty stades across prevents the Hellespont from making an island of it. 2 Across this isthmus a continuous fortified wall stretches from coast to coast. Behind the wall are ranged the towns of Aphrodisias, Thescos, and Ciberis, and at a very great distance from them near the strait itself, where the coastline forms a sharp angle, stands the town of Sestos, renowned in poetry, doubtless because of its associations with the story of Hero's lamp and of the death of her lover Leander. 3 Not far from Sestos is another small town which despite its extreme smallness, its lack of beauty and generally unprepossessing appearance is called Callipolis [24]. The surrounding country is graced with fields and roadsteads, dotted with a great variety of trees and blessed with streams of good drinking water and with a rich, fertile soil that produces a plentiful store of all the necessaries of life. The wall, then, encloses within its confines so many towns and such an extensive area of ground as to make an enemy attack no easy matter.

4 In an extravagantly hopeful frame of mind Zabergan began to entertain the notion that, if he were to knock down the wall and penetrate into the region behind it, he would soon be in a position to gain control of the sea. He fondly imagined that once there he would have an ample supply of ships and that after sailing with ease across the calm and peaceful waters of the narrow strait he would cross over into Asia where he would immediately ravage Abydus and sack the custom-house there. 5 And so spurred on by these wild designs he despatched to the Chersonese what in his view was a sufficiently large force for this task. He himself made straight for Constantinople with seven thousand horse, ravaging fields and attacking towns on his way and creating havoc and confusion wherever he went. 6 Though his real motive was the innate violence and rapacity that characterizes the behaviour of barbarians he used his hostility towards the Utigurs as a sort of excuse for his attack. The Utigurs were led by a Hun called Sandilch who was on extremely cordial terms of friendship and alliance with the Romans. He had won the esteem and affection of the Emperor and was a frequent recipient of his largesse. 7 The Cotrigurs on the other hand far from having any share in such favours were the object of open contempt. Consequently they felt that they ought to make this expedition in order to show that they too were a force to be reckoned with and feared and that they would tolerate no disrespect.

[24] i. e. "Fair City" = mod. Gallipoli.

13. Finding themselves unopposed, the Cotrigurs plundered and ravaged the land without mercy. They seized quantities of booty and took a huge number of prisoners. 2 Among the captives many ladies of noble birth who had chosen a life of chastity were cruelly dragged away and suffered the worst of all misfortunes, being forced to serve as the instruments of unbridled lust. Some of them had from their youth renounced marriage together with the love of material things and the cares of worldly society and had hidden themselves in the contemplative solitude of the cloister, prizing the celibate and unmarried state above all else and withdrawing themselves entirely from active life. 4 Even these were forcibly abducted from their cells and brutally raped. 3 And many married women who happened to be pregnant at the time were dragged away too. Then, when their babies were due, they gave birth to them on the march, unable to enjoy the privacy of a normal confinement or even to pick up and wrap the new-born babes. 4 In spite of everything they were hauled along and hardly given time even to feel their pain, while the wretched infants were abandoned and torn to pieces by dogs and birds, as though they had been brought into the world expressly for this and had tasted life in vain.

5 Indeed the fortunes of the Roman state had sunk so low that on the very outskirts of the Imperial City such atrocities were being committed by a handful of barbarians. But that was not the limit of their audacity: pressing on they passed without difficulty inside the Long Walls and approached the inner fortifications. Age and neglect had in fact caused the structure of the great wall to crumble and collapse in many places. Some parts of it the barbarians themselves knocked down, setting about their task with the nonchalant air of men demolishing their own property. 6 There was nothing to stop them, no sentries, no engines of defence, nobody to man them. There was not even the sound of a dog barking, as would at least have been the case with a pig-sty or a sheep-cot.

7 The Roman armies had not in fact remained at the desired level attained by the earlier Emperors but had dwindled to a fraction of what they had been and were no longer adequate to the requirements of a vast empire. And whereas there should have been a total effective fighting force of six hundred and forty-five thousand men, the number had dropped during this period to barely one hundred and fifty thousand. 8 Some of these, moreover, were stationed in Italy, others in Africa, others in Spain, others in Lazica, and others still in Alexandria and Egyptian Thebes. There were also a few near the eastern frontier with Persia, not that any more were needed there owing to the rigorous observance of the peace treaty. Such, then, was the extent of the drastic reductions in the armed forces incurred through the negligence of the authorities.

14. At an earlier date the Emperor had reduced Africa and the whole

of Italy, becoming as a result of those epoch-making campaigns almost the first of the rulers of Byzantium to be Emperor of the Romans in fact as well as in name. He had accomplished these and similar feats when he was still in the full vigour of his youth, but now in his declining years when old age was upon him he seemed to have wearied of vigorous policies and to prefer to play off his enemies against one another and, if necessary, to coax them away with gifts rather than rely on his own powers and expose himself to the hazards of a sustained struggle. 2 And so he allowed the quality of the legions to deteriorate, as though he thought he would have no further need of them.

Seizing the opportunity afforded by this mood of apathy those officials whose authority is second only to that of the Crown, and who are concerned with the levying of taxes on the subjects and the apportionment of supplies to the army,[25] began openly cheating the soldiers out of part of their pay and not paying the rest until it was long overdue. Then after an eventual belated payment of the arrears owing to the men these blackguardly and unscrupulous paymasters immediately took charge of the Rolls and called back the supplies. 3 It was in fact the prerogative of their rank to bring a bewildering variety of charges against the soldiers in order to deprive them of their food. And so whatever tribute-money was doled out to the legions managed somehow to find its way back again into the pockets of the same officials as had distributed it. 4 As a result of the neglect into which our gallant fighting men had fallen they were driven by privation to abandon the military profession in which they had been brought up and to scatter far and wide in search of a different livelihood. Consequently the soldiers' earnings were squandered on women of the street, on charioteers, on men whose fanatical and headstrong daring confined itself to stirring up civil strife and to supporting one colour against the other,[26] but who in real emergencies were cowardly and effeminate and on others still more degenerate than these. 5 It was for this reason that the whole of Thrace including even the towns in the vicinity of the Imperial City were deserted and unprotected, so that they were an easy prey for the barbarians, whose insolence reached such a pitch that they actually encamped near the village of Melantias not more than one hundred and forty stades distant from the capital. Melantias is on the river Athyras which flows past the village and continues on its course for a short distance winding gently in a north-easterly

25 i. e. The Logothetes cf. Averil Cameron, op. cit. p. 77 and for the exactions of these officials cf. Procopius: Secret History 24, 1—11 and History of the Wars VII I. 28—34.

26 The allusion is, of course, to the colours associated with the chariots of the two rival teams in the Hippodrome. It should moreover be borne in mind that support of either of these teams, together with the adherence to one or the other of the two rival factions (known as "the Blues and the Greens") that this entailed, was largely a political phenomenon.

direction until it empties itself into the Propontis: hence the roadstead situated on the shores of the Propontis at the mouth of the river takes its name from the river and is called Athyras too.

6 With the enemy encamped at such close quarters the citizens of Constantinople were terror-stricken and were already conjuring up the horrors of a siege, the burnings, the scarcity of foodstuffs and finally the walls being breached. 7 And so it frequently happened that even in the central thoroughfares of the city crowds of people would suddenly break out into a run, pushing and jostling in an unaccountable fit of terror, as though the barbarians had already forced their way in, and a tremendous din was raised in the shops as doors were violently slammed. 8 And not just the common people but even the authorities had succumbed to the prevailing mood of anguish and fear. Even the Emperor himself was, I imagine, impressed with the gravity of the situation. Accordingly all the churches sited outside the city on the European side and along the coastal strip which stretches alongside the Bosphorus from the Blachernae and the Golden Horn to the Euxine, where both it and the Bosphorus come to an end, were stripped of their ornaments by order of the Emperor. 9 All the costly gifts and other fittings were removed by those in charge of the operation. Some of these articles were brought in cart-loads into the city, whilst others were loaded on to ships, ferried across the strait and conveyed to the opposite side of the Bosphorus. The bare and unadorned aspect which the churches in that area now assumed made them look as though they had been recently built and were still unconsecrated.

15. So alarming was the prospect and such was the magnitude of the impending danger that a number of captains and commanders and men-at-arms had mounted guard over the fort at Sycae and the Golden Gate, with the idea of offering vigorous resistance in the event of an enemy attack. 2 But they did not constitute an effective fighting force of properly trained men, being drawn from those regiments known as Scholarii, who are specially selected to spend all their time at Court. Though they are called soldiers and have their names entered on the Rolls, most of them are merely civilians in splendid uniforms and perform such purely decorative functions as enhancing the pomp of a royal progress. 3 In times past entry to this corps was restricted to those who had seen active service. There was no enrolment fee and those who were accepted received this honour openly and without payment, in recognition of their former services on the field of battle. 4 Zeno the Isaurian seeems to have been the first to introduce the present practice by enrolling in these regiments, after his restoration, many of his fellow countrymen who, though they were men who had either not distinguished themselves on the field or had absolutely no military experience whatsoever, were nevertheless known to him in some other capacity and were his close

friends. 5 Then, once a precedent had been set whereby not only those whose distinguished military record entitled them to this privilege were enrolled but entry was extended, on a basis not of merit but of preference, to those who knew nothing of fighting, money, that most powerful of allies, entered the contest for admission and the whole business was dragged down to the level of the market place, with the result that it was no longer possible to join these regiments without first paying a fixed sum of money. On payment of this sum people are automatically enrolled without having to pass any sort of test and have their names included in the muster-rolls even if they do not know the first thing about warfare. 6 Once the principle of selection was disregarded the men were, naturally, under no compulsion to exert themselves since they had paid a high price to secure the privilege of idleness. These, then, were the sort of men that, in the absence of trained soldiers, appeared to be guarding the walls. 7 After the capital had been in a prolonged state of uproar and the barbarians had continued to ravage everything in the immediate vicinity the aged general, Belisarius, was sent out against them by order of the Emperor. 8 And now, after a great lapse of time, as he once more put on his breastplate and helmet and donned the familiar uniform of his younger days the memory of past exploits came flooding into the old man's mind and filled him with youthful ardour. Indeed by this feat of arms, which was to be the last in his life, he won as great a measure of glory as he had done by his earlier victories over the Vandals and the Goths. 9 The desperate urgency of the situation added importance and lustre to the enterprise and ensured an especially joyous reception for its successful outcome. I shall now proceed to give an accurate account of each successive event.

16. Displaying superb generalship and a daring out of all proportion to his age, Belisarius encamped at a short distance from the city in the village of Chettus. Already aged and ailing, his courage was nonetheless undiminished and no exertion seemed too great for him. 2 He was accompanied by slightly over three hundred heavily-armed troops, first-rate soldiers who had fought with him in some of his later campaigns. The rest of his following consisted of unarmed civilians who had no notion of what fighting involved and whose inexperience and ignorance of its harsh realities gave them the festive air of men who had come to watch a show rather than to fight a battle. 3 He was also accompanied by crowds of peasants from the neighbouring fields whose farms had been ravaged by the barbarians. Having nowhere to go they immediately gathered round Belisarius who took 4 advantage of the opportunity afforded by their numbers and put them to work digging a trench around the camp. Spies were sent out every now and then to form as accurate an estimate as possible of the strength of the enemy and bring back whatever additional information they could obtain, and in this

way he kept a close watch on events. 5 When night came he lit a large number of beacons which he had had planted at wide intervals over a colossal area of ground, in order that the enemy might be misled by the number of fires they saw into believing that he had a huge army. At first this stratagem succeeded and they were cowed into temporary inactivity, but it was not long before they heard that the Roman forces were totally inadequate and hopelessly outnumbered. 6 The soldiers, however, were full of confidence and enthusiasm and were convinced of their own superiority, regardless of the numbers of the enemy. After all they were Romans and had already fought many battles and faced great dangers. 7 But Belisarius, sensing their mood of elation and realizing that excessive pride in their past achievements was causing them to underestimate the gravity of the present situation, was afraid that they might get carried away on a wave of optimism and end up by painting an absurdly rosy picture of their prospects. To prevent this from happening he gathered them all together and, as though the impending struggle was now about to take place, he appeared in their midst and addressed them as follows:

17. "Soldiers, I have not come here to address you in the customary terms designed to calm your fears and raise your morale. Indeed I could hardly, without appearing to have forgotten all that past experience has taught me, urge Roman soldiers who had been brought up in the profession of arms and had demolished some of the mightiest empires on earth, I could hardly, I repeat, urge such men not to be afraid of facing a gang of barbarian vagabonds, especially when these happen to be Huns and Cotrigurs. 2 But seeing you filled with rash and over-confident daring I thought it not unreasonable to remind you of your traditional moderation. 3 Sane men must always be on their guard against any form of excess, even if it happens to be directed towards a praiseworthy end. There is nothing more inimical to intelligent planning or more conducive to wild and impractical vanity than the assumption that because one has done well in the past one must of necessity continue to do so in the future. Those, moreover, whose presumption leads them to abandon all sense of moderation are apt to find themselves fighting against the Almighty. 4 And there is another point which you must bear in mind: your superior courage is counterbalanced by their superior numbers, with the result that the advantage on one side is cancelled out by the advantage on the other. 5 It would indeed be shameful if, when our strength is more or less evenly matched by that of our enemy, we were to rush wildly into battle without due regard for timing and position and without making some allowance for the purely random and fortuitous role of chance. Brute force without the aid of sound judgement is powerless to defeat an enemy. 6 How, for instance, could I, with my grey hair and aged frame, long past the time for bearing arms, take part

in the hazards of warfare were it not possible to place some reliance on the benefits of discretion? Now, if a sound and steadfast mind sustains the faltering footsteps of the aged and rouses them to effective action, making good the deficiences of age by the application of foresight, how can it fail to confer still greater benefits on you who are still in your prime? 7 Those reverses brought about by some fortuitous event or by a failure of nerve may perhaps be rectified and turned to one's advantage by presence of mind and unerring judgement. But when things have been allowed to get out of hand through defective judgement and inadequate planning, where are we to turn for inspiration in our efforts to save the situation if the source of our ideas has already been polluted?

8 Yet people may perhaps marvel at me for employing such a novel style of exhortation. When I ought to be building up your confidence and raising your spirits I am in fact undermining your self-assurance and damping your ardour by introducing objections and casting doubt on your chances of success.

18. And indeed the prospect of going into battle in the company of men whose courage and daring are such that it would take the powers of an accomplished orator to persuade them to put even a momentary curb on their enthusiasm does fill me with pleasure and with hope. 2 But, even so, let each one of you bear in mind that unreflecting endeavour is not to be attributed to the generous impulses of courage but to foolhardly and wrong-headed audacity. May your bravery and enthusiasm find permanent and ever-increasing expression, but may all excessive daring and any tendency towards arrogance and obstinacy be tempered by the observance of reason and moderation. 3 The practice of considering carefully how one ought to tackle a problem does not engender cowardice and hesitation but creates a responsible and serious-minded attitude. A justifiable confidence is the logical outcome of the clearsighted choice of advantageous policies. Such a confidence is based on the knowledge that one is not advancing blindly into the unknown, but attaining to certainty through the exercise of judgement.

4 But some of you may contend that it not possible to put a sudden stop to the reasonable impulses and generous aspirations of a noble nature or to seek to curtail its activities by the imposition of an unnecessary period of reflection and delay, and that this is particularly the case in view of the indignation and resentment generated by the present outrageous conduct of the barbarians who have dared to extend their wholesale depredations to the very outskirts of the Imperial City. 5 This is indeed the situation and we have before our eyes a constant reminder of the righteousness of your anger against the enemy and of the extent to which they have abused our former leniency towards them. 6 Yet it should not, I think, prove too difficult a task for men of sound and balanced judgement to purge their angry feelings

of any element of irrational fury or instinctive urge to react violently regardless of the consequences, while at the same time retaining only the good qualities associated with such feelings — courage, resolution and the will to fight back.

7 Now, those emotions whose effect is altogether proper and desirable are wholly to be cultivated. But those that are capable also of having the reverse effect are not be used unconditionally but only in so far as they are advantageous. 8 I think you will all agree with me that, whereas prudence is a pure and unalloyed blessing, anger has its forceful and determined side, which is praiseworthy, but it also has its rash and impetuous side, which is unprofitable and undesirable. 9 Taking therefore, the former in its entirety and of the latter what is best, and tempering hardihood with discernment, let us march against the foe confident in the knowledge that no necessary course of action has been overlooked. 10 Only we must realize that it is with barbarians that we have to contend, men who are accustomed to fighting in the manner of brigands, to laying ambushes and making surprise attacks, but who have not been trained to stand their ground in open warfare. Though when they see that preparations have been made to engage them at close quarters and that the force that opposes and resists them has encamped in regular formation outside the walls and fortifications they will in all probability be obliged by the logic of the situation to abandon their normal practice and fight it out at close quarters. 11 But if we keep our heads and maintain our traditional high standards of discipline and efficiency, they will learn, to their cost, that the product of deliberate training received well in advance is in every respect vastly superior to the man who is obliged to improvise desperately in the face of dire necessity".

19. Belisarius' words had a sobering effect upon the soldiers, who nonetheless lost none of their bravery but there was more caution than conceit in their attitude. Their disciplined courage was, in its humble way, not unlike that exhibited by Leonidas and his Spartans at Thermopylae when Xerxes and his army were already approaching. 2 But the Spartans perished to a man, their fame resting solely on the fact that they did not die like cowards but killed a large number of Persians before they were overwhelmed. Belisarius and his Romans in addition to displaying the courage of Spartans routed all the enemy, inflicting heavy casualties on them and suffering practically no losses themselves.

3 What happened was as follows. A detachment of about two thousand barbarians on horseback suddenly separated from the rest of their forces and set off at a gallop, raising a terrific din as they went, convinced that they would sweep everything before them. As soon as the scouts arrived with the news that the enemy were practically upon them (and they were almost close enough to be pointed out) Belisarius immediately led out his men

against them, contriving as best he could to conceal the meagreness of his own numbers. 4 What he did was to select two hundred cavalrymen armed with shields and javelins and place them in ambush on either side of the woodland glen from which he thought that the barbarians would be making their attack. These troops were instructed to let fly with their javelins at the massed formation of the enemy as soon as he should give them the signal for action. The purpose of this operation was to roll up their flanks and crowd them in on themselves, so that in the resultant congestion they would be unable to make use of their superior numbers. 5 He also instructed the peasants and the more able-bodied of the citizens to follow him and to shout and make a loud rattling noise. He himself took his stand in the centre with the remaining troops, ready to sustain the first shock of the enemy attack. 6 As they drew nearer and most of them were already inside the area covered by the ambush, Belisarius and his men advanced to meet them and charged them head on. The peasants and the rest of the crowd cheered on the soldiers by shouting and causing a clatter with pieces of wood which they carried for this purpose. 7 As soon as the signal was given the other troops rushed out from their hiding-places and discharged a volley of missiles obliquely from either side. The shouting and confusion was out of all proportion to the scale of the fighting and at this point the barbarians, 8 finding themselves assailed by missiles on all sides, did exactly what Belisarius had anticipated. They closed in their ranks and huddled together so tightly that they could not defend themselves, since there was no room for them to use their bows and arrows or to manoeuvre with their horses. They seemed to be completely encircled and hemmed in by a vast army. 9 They were in fact stunned by the tremendous din created by the shouts and noises of the milling crowd behind the Roman lines and the cloud of dust that was raised prevented them from forming any idea of what the real numbers of the combatants were. 10 After engaging and destroying many of the enemy facing him, Belisarius broke their ranks and drove them into flight. Then as all the others bore down on them the barbarians turned their backs and fled in complete disorder, scattering in all directions. They made no effort to guard their rear, but each man took what he thought was the swiftest route to safety. 11 The Romans followed them in an orderly and disciplined pursuit, making short work of all they could lay their hands on. The barbarians were slaughtered in great numbers as they galloped away without even turning round to look back. The reins of their horses were completely relaxed and the incessant cracking of whips precluded any slackening of the pace. 12 Even the skill on which they pride themselves so greatly deserted them in their hour of terror. For when fleeing the barbarians normally defend themselves most effectively against those who press the pursuit the hardest and they do this by turning round and shooting

arrows at their pursuers. The arrows strike their target not only with their own momentum but also with the added force of the oncoming pursuit, so that the impact is correspondingly greater.

20. But on that occasion the Huns were completely demoralized and made no attempt to defend themselves. About four hundred of them lost their lives. On the Roman side there were no fatal casualties and only a few wounded.

2 It was with immense relief that Zabergan, their leader, and the others who had managed to escape reached camp. And it was, moreover, chiefly to the exhaustion of their pursuers' horses that they owed their lives, otherwise they would certainly have been annihilated. Even so, their abrupt entry, and the panic-stricken manner in which they burst into the enclosure of the camp threw the rest of their forces into confusion and filled them with the alarming prospect of imminent destruction. Loud and savage cries were heard as they slashed their cheeks with daggers and gave vent to their traditional form of lamentation.

3 Meanwhile the Romans withdrew, after having achieved a measure of success to which, though it was altogether staggering in the circumstances, the wisdom and foresight of their commander had entitled them. Immediately after this disaster, however, the barbarians broke up camp and retreated in terror from Melantias. 4 Though Belisarius could in all likelihood have harassed their line of march and killed still more of them, since it would have been a question of pursuing men whose spirit was already broken and who seemed to be fleeing rather than retreating, he returned at once to the capital, not of his own accord but because he had been instructed to do so by the Emperor.

5 As soon in fact as the news of his victory had reached the ears of the people they had begun to sing his praises whenever they gathered together and to describe him as the saviour of the nation. This popularity was extremely irksome to many people in high places who fell a prey to envy and jealousy — passions whose baneful influence never ceases to assail the noblest achievements. And so they put about slanderous rumors to the effect that the popularity he was enjoying had turned his head and that he was aspiring to higher things. [27] 6 These calumnies brought about his speedy return and prevented him from consolidating his achievements. Indeed he received no recognition for what he had already accomplished. Instead they did their utmost to erase the memory of his victory and to deny him any credit for it. 7 It has already been amply demonstrated by some of the most brilliant minds of antiquity that initiative is blunted and all incentive to action destroyed when noble spirits are deprived of their rightful share

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27 i.e. to usurping the throne.

of acclaim and that in consequence those qualities that have been disparaged, whether they are associated with military success, literary achievement or with some other matter of vital concern, cease, much to the detriment of society, to be properly cultivated. I think, moreover, that it requires no great perspicacity to see that the truth of this assertion is continually borne out by our own everyday experience.

8 At first the Huns, under the impression that they were being pursued, fled in consternation from the Long Walls. But when they discovered that Belisarius had been recalled and that no one else had been sent out against them, they slowly began to drift back.

21. Meanwhile the other detachment of barbarians which was besieging the Chersonese attacked the wall repeatedly, bringing up ladders and siege-engines, but was beaten off each time by the resolute resistance of the Romans defending it. 2 The defenders were led by Germanus the son of Dorotheus, who despite his extreme youth was an exceptionally able general and possessed qualities of daring and resourcefulness far in excess of his years. He was a native of the Illyrian town of Bederiana as it used to be called. It was later renamed Prima Iustiniana, being in fact the birth-place of the Emperor Justinian who, as only proper, adorned the town with a variety of splendid public buildings, raised it from obscurity to wealth and opulence, and endowed it with his own name. Germanus, moreover, was related to the Emperor, who consequently took a personal interest 3 in his welfare and had him brought at the age of eight to the Imperial City, where the boy was given every advantage, receiving a first-class school education and then going on to university where he studied Latin as well as Greek.

4 As soon as he came to man's estate Justinian sent him to the Chersonese, making him Commander of the forces there, in order to give him a proper and useful outlet for his youthful enthusiasms and to prevent him from dissipating his energies and wasting his substance on wild escapades in the turbulent atmosphere of the Hippodrome with its chariot races and its popular factions, all of which things tend to have a profoundly disturbing effect on the minds of the young, who are readily attracted to such follies unless they are distracted and kept busy at some worthwile occupation.

5 At that time, then, when the Huns were besieging the Chersonese, the youthful Germanus doggedly repelled their attacks and displayed unfailing ingenuity in the conduct of its defence. His own innate ability gave him an intuitive grasp of the situation and of the best way to cope with it and he lent a ready ear to the advice of the older and more experienced soldiers on his staff. 6 When all attempts either to besiege the fort or to take it by storm proved equally fruitless, the barbarians decided to embark upon a different course which was both extremely daring and extremely risky. It meant that they would either capture the place quickly or abandon it for

good and return home. 7 And so they set about gathering enormous quantities of very long reeds of exceptional thickness and toughness, which they fastened and bound together with cord and twine, producing in this way a considerable number of bundles. Across the two ends and the middle they fitted wooden spars and lashed the bundles together, securing them very tightly with thick ropes, so that three or more of them went to make up a single boat sufficiently wide to hold four men and sufficiently deep to bear their weight without sinking. They constructed not less than one hundred and fifty craft of this type. 8 To make them more seaworthy they brought together the front ends, curving them upwards in the shape of a beaked prow and devised improvised rowlocks and outriggers on either side.

22. Then, when they had secured everything as best they could they launched them all secretly into the sea near the western shore of the bay that sweeps round the town of Aenus. 2 About six hundred men embarked in them with a great quantity of shovels which they fitted into the rowlocks and propelling themselves after a fashion with this rudimentary form of oar, they put far out to sea, heavily armed and ready for action. They thought that by gradually rowing out further and further they would easily get past the arm of the wall that stretched out to sea as far as the deep water, and would then be able to step ashore in perfect safety further down the coast where no walls enclosed it and its only protection was that afforded by the waters of the Hellespont.

3 When Germanus received intelligence of these plans and learnt that an armada of reed boats was on the way he scoffed at the enemy for their folly but at the same time was delighted at it because he knew that they had played into his hands. 4 He immediately dispatched twenty fast skiffs with fore-and-aft rudders, equipping them with a full complement of rowers and helmsmen and men armed with breastplates, shields, bows and arrows and halberts, and had them moored out of sight in the inlet of water behind the wall. 5 When the barbarians were already past the end part of the wall that juts out from the shore they began to swerve towards the coast and were borne on in a mood of confident elation. It was at this point that the Roman boats put out to sea against them. Sped on by the tide the Romans bore down on them, and struck violently prow to prow against the 6 reed boats of the barbarians, which were spun round by the force of the impact, throwing their crews off their feet as they rocked and lurched from side to side. Some were thrown overboard and drowned, others flopped down weakly, having no idea what to do next. Even those who were still on their feet were jolted by the motion of the waves whose effect would have been moderate or almost negligible on a boat or a ship but was tremendous on these reed-built craft because of their extreme lightness. 7 One moment they shot up on the crest of the wave, another they plunged down as it

broke. They made no attempt to fight, since the most they could possibly hope for was to keep steady on their feet. 8 While the barbarians were thus dumbfounded the Romans broke their line wherever they could and by throwing their weight against them as is done in a land battle cast many of the enemy into the sea without difficulty since they themselves had a firm and secure foothold in their own boats. Some they closed in on and slew with their swords. 9 But since in many cases the Romans were some way off and were not yet at close quarters they reached out with their halberts and cut through the cords that bound the reeds together until the whole structure disintegrated. Severed from one another the reeds floated about, drifting away in all directions, while the Huns suddenly found themselves sinking as the bottoms fell out of their boats. They perished to a man and not one of them lived to see dry land again.

23. Collecting all the weapons of the enemy that were still floating about, the Romans sailed back to their earlier position and filled the whole army with rejoicing at the news of the happy event. A general assembly of all the troops was then held at which it was decided that it was imperative for them to follow up their advantage. 2 A few days later, therefore, they armed themselves and made a sudden sortie from the wall against the besiegers, whose numbers were still very great but whose morale was at its lowest ebb owing to the fact that they had not yet recovered from their recent shattering defeat. 3 Germanus, who being still very young was not really mature enough to restrain his natural impulses but was instead more easily swayed by youthful ardour and love of glory than by considerations of prudence and safety, rushed dauntlessly into battle against the enemy on that occasion, nor did he confine himself to giving orders and encouraging his men like a general but bore the brunt of the fighting like a common soldier. As a result of this impetuosity he was struck in the thigh by an arrow and very nearly obliged to withdraw from the fight. But the urgency of the situation and the importance of the undertaking proved stronger than his pain and he did not cease to exert himself or to cheer on the others until he had inflicted considerable damage on the enemy and destroyed large numbers of them. 4 Whereupon the fighting came to an end and the Romans returned and took up position behind the wall, judging it neither safe nor prudent to engage in protracted combat against superior forces.

5 The barbarians, however, were so thoroughly demoralized as a result of the losses sustained in the disastrous disintegration of their boats and in the surprise attack which the Romans had made against them that they left the neighbourhood of the Chersonese there and then and set off to join Zabergan and his forces. It was destined to be a reunion of defeated men. 6 The Cotrigurs that had been sent to Greece achieved nothing worthy of mention,

having neither attacked the Isthmus[28] nor even passed Thermopylae on account of the presence there of a Roman garrison. And so this band too began to withdraw, marching in the direction of Thrace, doubtless with the idea of joining up with their fellow countrymen and returning home in their company. 7 But Zabergan and his forces said that they would not leave until they also acquired a vast sum of money from the Romans, just as the Utigurs had done. They threatened, moreover, to massacre the captives unless they were speedily ransomed by their relatives. 8 Accordingly the Emperor sent what he considered was a large enough quantity of gold to ransom the captives and secure the peaceful withdrawal of the Cotrigurs. Among the many captives returned was the general Sergius the son of Bacchus who by an unlucky chance had been captured a short time before and was reduced to the same unhappy plight as the rest. And so the Cotrigurs eventually put a stop to their depredations and began to make their way back home. They were soon joined by their comrades who had arrived from Greece.

24. To the inhabitants of Constantinople the terms agreed upon seemed cowardly, dishonorable and base, since they appeared to involve the passive acceptance of an intolerable state of affairs. For instead of meeting with instant destruction when their insolent mockery had brought them within hailing distance of the capital they had been rewarded with a gift of gold, as though we were atoning for some wrong which we had done them. 2 But the Emperor's decision was aimed at the attainment of a different and more ambitious object which was realized shortly afterwards and to such good effect that it convinced his former critics of his remarkable foresight and sagacity. He had in fact resolved to employ every conceivable stratagem in order to sow dissension among the barbarians and bring them into mutual conflict. With this end in view he immediately sent a letter, while Zabergan and his men were marching at a leisurely pace, to Sandilch the leader of the other Hunnic trible, who was an ally and in the pay of the Empire. 3 The contents of the letter were roughly as follows:

"If you had full knowledge of the outrages which the Cotrigurs have perpetrated against us and were then quite prepared to do nothing about it, in that case we should have every reason to be surprised both at your treachery and at our own lack of judgement in not having made an accurate assessment of your character. But if you are not yet in possession of the facts, then your conduct is pardonable. But there is no other way for you to prove your ignorance of past events save by your prompt action hereafter. 4 The prime concern of the Cotrigurs and indeed the reason for their presence here was not, except as an afterthought, to ravage our domain but to

[28] of Corinth.

prove by their actions that in preferring to place our trust in you we had been deceived into overlooking the claim of a much superior people. They consider it intolerable in fact that any one should call them the equals of the Utigurs or even suggest that they are somewhat superior to them, indeed they are barely content with being accorded an overwhelming superiority. 5 Consequently they have overrun the whole of Thrace, not desisting until they had carried off all the gold that we are accustomed to pay to you each year in return for your services. Though we could easily have wiped them out, or at least sent them away empty-handed, we did neither of these things in order to test your sentiments. 6 For if you are really possessed of superior courage and wisdom and are not disposed to tolerate the appropriation by others of what belongs to you, you will not now suffer any loss, since you have an excellent opportunity to avenge yourselves and receive your pay by right of victory from the enemy as though we ourselves had sent it to you through them. 7 But if even after having received such insults at their hands you still choose to be so timorous and so utterly spineless as to take no action whatsoever, then you may rest assured that you will be struck off our pay-roll and that we shall be ready to bestow our largesse upon them. In that case you will have to learn humility and make way for your betters, since we shall most certainly have to transfer to them the treaty of alliance which we made with you and your nation. Indeed even in different circumstances it would be senseless for us to share in the humiliations of the vanquished when we are in a position to win the friendship of the victors".

25. When Sandilch learnt from an interpeter the contents of this letter it immediately produced the desired effect. He fell at once into a rage and was eager to punish the Cotrigurs there and then for their insolence, a predictable reaction in a man with the arrogant and mercenary mentality of a barbarian. 2 Consequently he set off straight away with the army and made a surprise attack on the home territory of the enemy. Those who had remained behind were caught off their guard and he took many women and children into captivity. When the Cotrigurs returning from Thrace had just crossed the Danube he confronted them suddenly, killing many of them and robbing them off the money which they had received from the Emperor and of all their booty. 3 Then no sooner had the survivors returned home than they joined with the rest of their compatriots in preparing for war against the Utigurs. And so from that time onwards both peoples continued to make war against each other for a very long period of time and they became increasingly hostile as a result. 4 On some occasions they would confine themselves to predatory incursions, on others they would resort to open warfare until they have so weakened themselves and their numbers have become so seriously depleted that they have lost their national identity.

5 The scattered remnant of these Hunnic tribes has in fact been reduced to servitude in the lands of other peoples whose names they have assumed; so severe has been the penalty which they have paid for their earlier misdeeds. But the complete annihilation of these two peoples occurred at a later date, so that I shall do my best to preserve a strict chronological order and provide a detailed account of this event in its proper place.

6 When the dissension between the Cotrigurs and the Utigurs was still at its height the news of what had happened reached Constantinople and the wisdom and foresight of the Emperor was clearly and amply demonstrated to all. The barbarians were destroying one another whilst he without resorting to arms was, thanks to his brilliant diplomacy, the ultimate victor and was bound to profiit whatever the outcome of the fighting. And so since they were continually embroiled in internal troubles they no longer had any idea of attacking the domain of the Romans, indeed they sank into an almost total obscurity.

INDEX OF PROPER NAMES

The following Index is based on Keydell's Index Nominum. Reference is to the book, paragraph and section numbers of the Greek text * and, though only approximate at times, is never more than a few words out.

* i. e. as reproduced in the present translation.